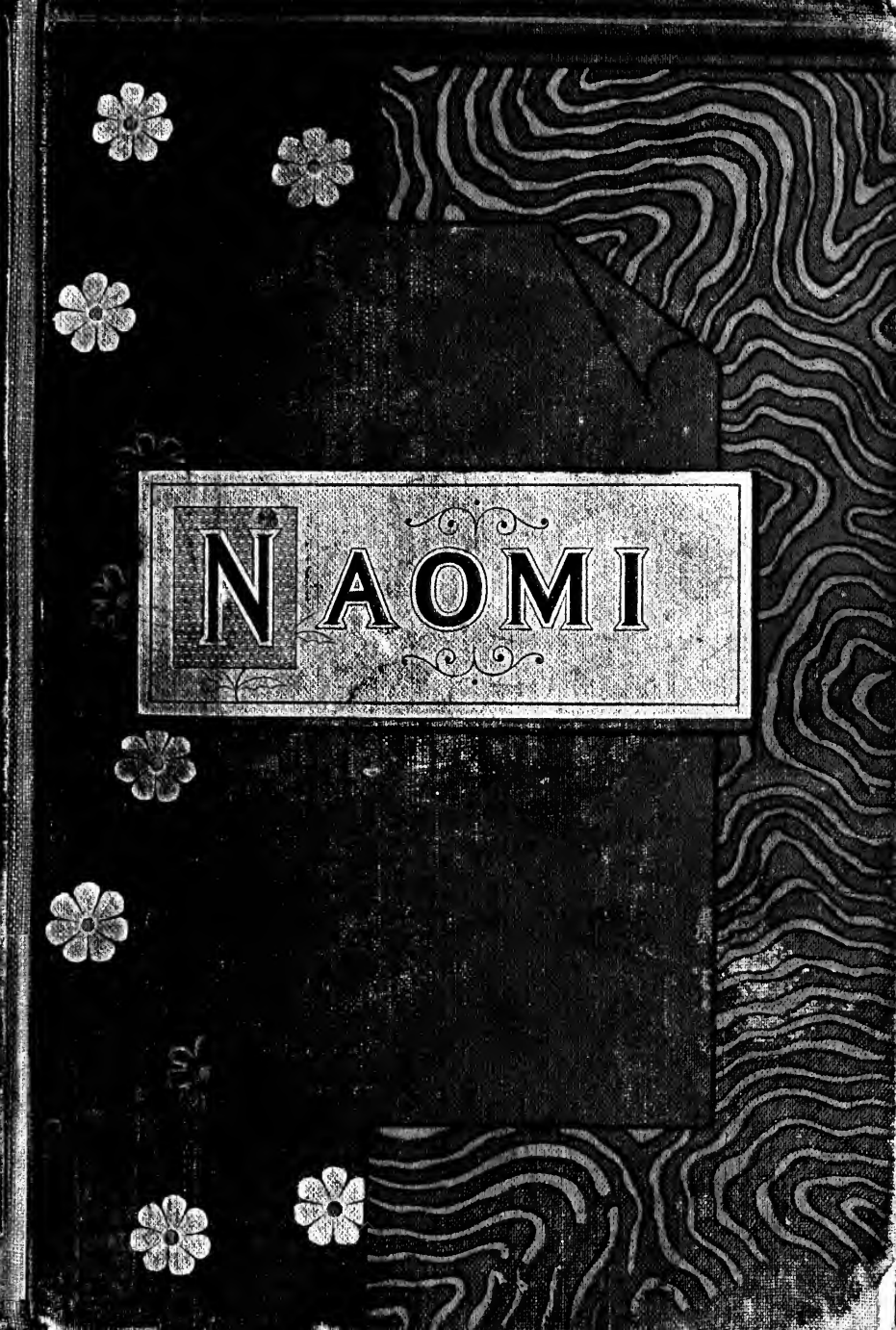
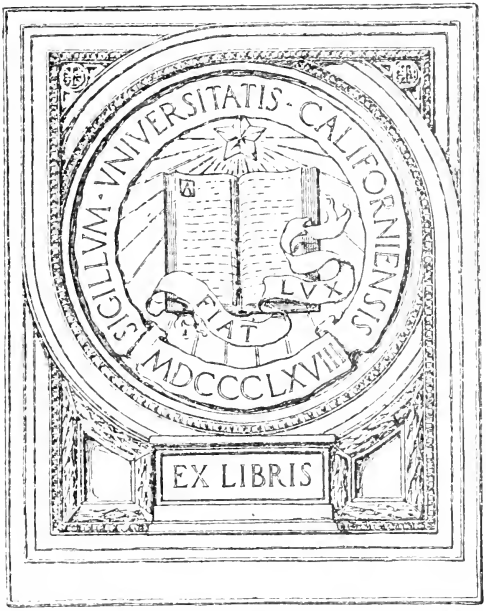

NAOMI

IN MEMORIAM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NAOMI

OR THE

LAST DAYS OF JERUSALEM

BY

MRS. J. B. WEBB

AUTHOR OF "HELEN MORDAUNT"

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS
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BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

HELEN MORDAUNT

OR

THE STANDARD OF LIFE.

With Illustrations by JOHN ABSOLON.

IN MEMORIAM

PREFACE

TO

THE SEVENTEENTH EDITION.

If when this book was first written the Author could say that the "signs of the times pointed strongly towards the Holy Land and the once glorious city of Jerusalem, and that the eyes of many — both Jews and Gentiles — were turned thither in anxious expectation," how much more emphatically may the same assertion now be made!

The interest felt for God's ancient people, the Jews, has been gradually increasing; and their condition, as a people, has been greatly improved. Many decrees have been passed in their favour in various lands; and in few civilized countries are they now subjected to either persecution or contumely. Moreover, the hearts of multitudes of Christians are awakened to feelings of love and sympathy towards their elder brethren of the Jewish Church: the servants of Christ "think upon the

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stones of Jerusalem, and it pitieth them to see her in the dust."

All this, combined with many other circumstances to which the attention of the world has been called of late years, leads us to hope that as the threatened *judgments* of the Lord have been awfully accomplished in the dispersion of his chosen people, his *promises* for their restoration may ere long be found equally sure. We know that there is a "*tribulation* —the *great one*"—yet to be brought on the land of Israel, and on her gathered population; but that will usher in their final glory and redemption. Then the same Almighty power which has turned the fruitful field into a "desolate wilderness," will cause that "wilderness" to "blossom as the rose;" and the same hand that once scattered the Jews over the face of the world, and made them a proverb and a by-word to the Gentile nations, will "bring them again to their own land," and make them the "joy of the whole earth."

While we contemplate the present fallen condition of the children of Israel, and the desolate state in which their "good land"—once "flowing with milk and honey"—is still lying, our minds naturally revert to their former glory, and the unexampled prosperity with which they were blessed: and we ask *wherefore* they have thus been degraded from their high position? God's word gives the answer —"Because they rebelled against the Lord, and

lightly regarded the judgments of the Most High :" and, believing that such considerations may be both interesting and profitable to young readers, the Author ventured—with a full sense of her own incompetence to do justice to the subject—to attempt a narrative, the scene of which is chiefly laid in Jerusalem; and the period it embraces is one of the most eventful and calamitous that has ever been detailed in history. It may be thought that the circumstances of horror and bloodshed have been dwelt on with too much minuteness; but let it be remembered that all the events here related, and many others far more appalling, did actually take place when God avenged himself on his rebellious people: and let it further be remembered, that these things were intended not only for the chastisement of the Jews, but also for the warning of the Gentiles.

We know, from the declaration of Christ himself, that a *greater tribulation* is yet to come on the earth. God grant that we may be warned in time, and prepared to meet it! May we be among those blessed servants of the Lord for whom a surer refuge—a more glorious Pella—will be provided in that day, that so we may "escape those things that are coming on the earth, and stand before the Son of Man!"

The Author cannot forbear here expressing her sense of the favour and indulgence with which her

attempt to portray "the last days of Jerusalem" has been hitherto received; and her earnest hope that it may have led some of her readers to feel a greater interest in the Jews, and to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem." Let us pray also for their conversion, and their preparation to meet their expected Messiah: for thus shall we be exercising the highest duties of Christian charity, and repaying in the best manner our obligations to those unto whom the promises of God were first made, and "from whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BARTLETT.

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NAOMI.

CHAPTER I.

The sun was slowly sinking behind the lofty buildings which crowned the hill of Zion, and its departing beams were glowing on the marble walls and golden pinnacles of the Temple, when young Naomi and her friend Claudia came forth from the dwelling of Zadok the priest, and wandered down the lovely little stream of Siloë. They passed through the Water Gate, and entered a garden of luxuriant fruit-trees, which extended to the margin of the brook Kedron on the east, while its southern boundary was watered by Siloë's rippling waves, which flowed into the Kedron at that spot. Here the two maidens seated themselves, to enjoy the balmy freshness of an evening in an eastern clime, and to gaze upon the glorious city which lay before them, now hushed in silence as the day declined, and the clear blue vault of heaven that stretched without a cloud above their heads.

"Naomi," said Claudia, "how sweetly the peaceful silence of this quiet spot comes over my soul, after the noise and tumult of the day! When my father sent me from the Roman camp, to take refuge with you in your Holy City, I hoped to have found safety and tranquillity; but instead of the calm cheerfulness which reigned within these walls in former years, when I spent so much of my happy childhood with you, I now find nothing but discord and rebellion; and instead of the sweet sounds of

the timbrel and pipe, I hear the din of war, the clashing of arms, and the trampling march of soldiers in their military exercises. My spirit sinks when I look forward to the scenes we may yet witness. Our legions will surely turn their march towards Jerusalem, when the conquest of the cities of Galilee is completed; and what can your troops, though brave, hope to do, when opposed to the soldiers of Vespasian? or how will your gates and boasted walls be able to stand against the powerful engines of the Romans?"

"We fear them not, Claudia," replied the high-spirited young Jewess, and her bright black eyes flashed as she spoke; "we fear them not. Never shall our holy and beautiful city be given into the hands of those fierce and cruel idolaters. Forgive me, dear Claudia, but though they are your countrymen, and you have been brought up in their impious religion, I cannot forbear expressing my firm conviction that the God of our fathers will yet preserve us from these Gentiles, nor suffer the house where He has placed his name to be again trampled on and defiled by those who know him not."

"I forgive you, Naomi; indeed, I love to see you when these proud thoughts fill your breast. You look like our majestic goddess Minerva, and only want a panoply of mail to personate her well. My heart is of a different mould to yours; and I admire your spirit, though I cannot emulate it. You should have been born a Roman, and you would have rivalled any of our heroines of old."

"Better far to be a daughter of Israel," replied Naomi. "Better far to be one of God's own people, though now for our sins we are degraded and in sorrow, than to belong to that nation who are employed in the hand of Jehovah to chastise his chosen race! Soon will He, for whom we wait in eager expectation, appear in the clouds in glory, and rescue his children from all those that oppress them. Then shall the people who worship stocks and stones be driven away before the brightness of his

coming, and his own adopted children be exalted for ever!"

The colour mounted into the usually pale cheeks of Naomi, as she thus expressed her own enthusiastic feelings, while her eyes were fixed on the darkening sky above her, and her hands upraised, as if even then she awaited the sound of the trumpet, and the vision of the Messiah coming in the air. The expectation of his immediate appearance was, at that period, very widely diffused and strongly felt by the Jews; and it is supposed that this vain hope had greatly encouraged them in their revolt, and obstinate resistance against the power of the Romans. They entertained a firm conviction that their great Deliverer would shortly be manifested to his people, and that although for a time their oppressors had been permitted to triumph over them, yet their destruction as a people would never take place; and that in their hour of greatest extremity their King and Saviour would appear, to re-establish the throne of his father David, and to raise their nation to a glory and prosperity surpassing that of Solomon.

Claudia was impressed by the vehemence of her friend's manner; but she regarded all her hopes as vain delusions, and, after a pause, she replied:

"Naomi, your wild religion blinds and deceives you, and in these visionary expectations you forget the danger of the present time. Instead of indulging in such idle dreams, your wisest course would be, to use all your influence in persuading your father to abandon this city while yet there is time, and throw himself on the clemency of Vespasian. Zadok's character stands high, both among the Romans and his own people, for wisdom, integrity, and courage; and if he were to take so prudent a step, and recommend it to his countrymen, his example would probably be followed by many, if not all; and oh! Naomi, what bloodshed and misery would be averted! Your nation would be restored to peace and security, and

plenty would again be seen in those districts which our legions have already reduced to desolation. Had you witnessed all the horrors of war and massacre that I have done, I think even your courage would shrink from drawing such fearful calamities upon your beloved city. My blood curdles when I remember the miseries of which I was an unwilling spectator, while I accompanied my father in Vespasian's camp. Truly I believe the sight of sufferings which she could not relieve, added to the fatigue and constant excitement of our military life, hastened the death of my dear mother. Would that the gods had permitted her and me to remain in Jerusalem when my father was called to join the army! Then I should not thus early have had to weep over her grave: but it was her fate, and I must submit."

The tears rolled down the fair countenance of Claudia as she spoke of her beloved mother, and ineffectually sought consolation for her death in the cold maxims of philosophy, which were all that the heathen system of religion could afford her. Naomi endeavoured, as she had often done before, to awaken in her dark mind the belief in one Almighty God, by whose superintending Providence all events are governed; but her friend was too firmly convinced of the truth of her own religion to be thus easily shaken, or induced to listen to the despised doctrines of a Jew; she therefore hastily resumed the subject of the war, and, in spite of Naomi's indignant replies, continued to urge upon her the necessity of submission to the overwhelming and resistless power of Rome.

"Claudia," said Naomi at length, rising from her mossy seat, and extending her hand towards the lofty walls and towers of the city, now dark in the shades of evening; "Claudia, I would rather, oh! ten thousand times rather perish beneath those sacred walls, if it be the will of Jehovah that the spoiler should again possess them, than live to see my people once more subject to the Roman power. We have nobly shaken it off, and

never till we are exterminated will we cease to resist their oppressions, and assert our freedom. You wonder at my enthusiasm, as you call it; but be assured the same spirit animates every son and every daughter of Israel: and when your proud legions advance beneath these impenetrable walls, they will be received with such a welcome as shall prove that in Jerusalem at least the soul of our fathers still survives."

"May the gods preserve us from beholding the conflict!" answered Claudia, with a shudder, as she rose to accompany her friend towards their home: "I should regret then that I had persuaded my father to send me here, after my poor mother's death, instead of to Cæsarea, as he proposed; but my heart was with you, Naomi, and I felt that in your company, and that of your gentle mother, I should find comfort in my sorrow. My father's strong regard and high esteem for Zadok induced him to consent to my returning to your house, as your mother's letter so kindly proposed; and at that time he had no idea that the war would continue so long, or spread from Galilee into Judea. Should Vespasian bring his army against Jerusalem—as my father's last letter seemed to announce—he will of course send for me, and place me at Cæsarea, with his friends who dwell there, and from thence I could easily embark for Rome, and join my brother Marcellus. He has been residing in the capital with our uncle Sulpitius ever since we left Jerusalem two years ago; and he writes me glowing descriptions of the splendour and magnificence of the imperial city. You know we were both so young when we came from our native land to Judea, that we had forgotten all her glory and beauty. Marcellus tells me that he is very soon to be enrolled among the emperor's troops, and then he will probably be sent into this country, if the war is not concluded. Now I shall rejoice to see my dear, kind brother again; and you too, Naomi, will not you welcome him? You were always the greatest friends; and every letter

he writes is full of inquiries and kind messages to you. But, alas! I forget myself. If Marcellus comes to Judea, it will probably be as the enemy of your land and people; and this cruel war will separate those who have been brought up together, and loved each other as brother and sister from childhood."

Naomi was saved the embarrassment of a reply by their reaching her father's house; and she was glad of the circumstance, for the theme interested her feelings more than she wished Claudia to discover. Rufus the centurion had resided for many years at Jerusalem, holding a command in the imperial army, and his band composing part of the guards stationed in the city. Mutual obligations, and a respect for each other's character, had created a sincere friendship between him and Naomi's father Zadok, who, though he was a priest, and devotedly attached to the Jewish faith, was not blind to the generous and excellent qualities which distinguished the Roman soldier. Their families had constant intercourse, and their children grew up together in habits of familiar friendship. Naomi and Claudia regarded each other as sisters; nor did the difference of their religion or the contrast in their dispositions ever cause a disagreement between them. Marcellus was their constant companion, and their protector in their rambles among the verdant hills, and luxurious meadows and gardens which surrounded the city; and the mutual attachment which grew up between him and Naomi was remarked and smiled at by their parents while they were yet children. But as they advanced in years, it caused some uneasiness to Zadok and his amiable wife Salome, who could not allow themselves to contemplate the possibility of a union between their beloved daughter and an idolater. Nor was such an intention ever entertained by Naomi her soul was peculiarly susceptible to feelings of piety; and she worshipped the God of her fathers with a sincerity and fervency of devotion which was not common

in the days of degeneracy and hypocrisy in which she lived. Idolatry she regarded with unfeigned abhorrence; and while she loved her Roman friends with all the natural warmth of an affectionate heart, she grieved for their profane and impious creed, and many were the attempts she made to convince them of its folly. Hitherto her efforts had been entirely unavailing, and she could gain no further concession from her young companions than an acknowledgment that Jehovah, the God of Israel, might certainly be *a Deity;* but they looked upon him merely as one of that host of deities in whom their religion taught them to believe, and by no means superior to their own false gods. This being the case, Naomi would have preferred death to a connexion with a Gentile idolater; and she persuaded herself that her attachment to Marcellus was nothing more than friendship.

When, however, Rufus and his family were called away from Jerusalem, and his son was sent to Rome to perfect his military education, she felt a void in her heart which convinced her that she had allowed too much of her happiness to depend on Marcellus, and she resolutely determined to check every thought and extinguish every hope that was connected with him. At the time of which we are now speaking he had been absent for two years; and her praiseworthy efforts had been so far successful that she had recovered her spirits, and entered into all her duties and occupations with interest and animation. She was gifted with a strong mind, and a proud, independent spirit, which enabled her to command her feelings to a great degree; and even her mother, who was usually her confident in all her joys and sorrows, believed that she had entirely forgotten the brave and amiable young Roman.

The return of her friend Claudia, to seek protection in Zadok's house, when the death of her own mother rendered it impossible for her to remain with Rufus in the camp, was a source of great delight to Naomi; but it revived

many recollections which she had long been endeavouring to banish from her mind, and she found herself listening with pleasure to Claudia's often-repeated praises of her brother, and the kind messages which his letters contained to herself; but she never spoke of him except as the friend of her childhood, whom, in all probability, she should never see again.

Perhaps the contrast between Marcellus and her own brother Javan had exalted the good qualities of the former in her eyes. Javan, even as a child, had manifested a cruel and unhumbled disposition; and his domineering spirit had been the frequent cause of disputes between him and Marcellus, who invariably took the part of the oppressed, and defended those whom Javan would have annoyed or injured. The affection which Naomi entertained for Marcellus excited his jealousy and indignation; and he often upbraided her with her friendship for idolaters, and used very opprobrious language to the young Roman himself, which, but for the interposition of their sisters, would have ended perhaps in fierce and fatal contests.

As Javan arrived at years of manhood, this unamiable temper rather increased than lessened; and it was greatly aggravated by the spirit of fanaticism which took possession of his soul, and rendered his religion a motive to fierce and arrogant conduct, instead of having the effect of softening his heart, and leading him to such holy and gentle and charitable dispositions as are most acceptable to the God of love and mercy. His father Zadok was of the sect of the Pharisees, and was therefore a strict and rigid observer of the ceremonial law,—not only of every point which was enjoined by the lawgiver Moses, but also of all those customs which were derived from the traditions of the Elders. He did not, however, fall into the grievous error which was so severely rebuked by our blessed Saviour; he did not, like so many of his self-righteous brethren, "wash merely the outside of the cup

and platter, while inwardly their hearts were full of extortion and violence;" neither did he "make broad his phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of his garments," merely "to be seen of men." It is true that such erroneous motives did to a certain degree influence his conduct, but he was nevertheless a man of sincere piety and devotion; and his prayers in secret were not less frequent and regular than the public acts of worship which, according to the custom of the priests and Pharisees, he performed in the streets and marketplaces.

Javan emulated, and even surpassed his excellent father in a scrupulous adherence to the minutest points of ceremony. He performed the many ablutions prescribed by law and tradition: and even paid tithe of the mint and cummin, and other herbs, which grew almost spontaneously in his father's fertile garden: but unhappily he had none of the real piety which distinguished Zadok; and the violence of his temper and haughtiness of his disposition were a source of constant sorrow to his gentle mother.

Salome was of a spirit far different to that of any of the other members of her family: mild, timid, and dependent, she was guided in everything by her husband; and as his office in the priesthood necessarily kept him much from home, she found herself unequal to controlling the spirits of either Javan or Naomi; and her mistaken indulgence was the cause of much that was to be regretted in the character of each of her children. The affectionate disposition of Naomi, and the natural candour and rectitude of her mind, preserved her from being as much injured as her wayward brother was, by the undue liberty which they enjoyed during their childhood and early youth. She was devotedly attached to her mother; and from her she derived those lessons of piety and fervent charity, which were remarkable in her character, though the energy of her soul carried her far beyond Salome in enthusiastic feeling and active performance of duty.

She was the pride and delight of both her parents; and probably the preference which they felt and could hardly conceal for her, produced an evil tendency in the heart of Javan; who, feeling that he was less beloved than his sister, instead of endeavouring to imitate her dutiful and affectionate behaviour, became sullen and morose, and shunned the society of his family. Naomi made every effort to recover his affection, though with little success. She wove for him the broadest and most beautiful fringes to adorn the borders of his festal garment according to the commandment of the Lord to Moses, and fixed upon the fringe a ribbon of the brightest blue.* And she employed the skill she had acquired from her father (and which she possessed in a far higher degree than the generality of Jewish females), in writing upon slips of white parchment choice sentences from the law, to compose the phylacteries that he wore on his forehead and on his wrist—a custom which the Jews derived from the direction to make the commandments of God "a sign upon their hand, and a memorial between their eyes."† Unhappily it had become perverted from its original meaning, and had sunk into a mere superstitious form; and many, especially of the Pharisees, were contented to carry the law of the Lord upon their persons and their garments, while it entered not into their hearts. When Javan came home in a sullen mood, Naomi would take her harp, and sing to him one of the songs of the royal Psalmist; and her sweet voice had frequently the same effect on her brother that the young shepherd's had on Saul—the evil spirit would depart from him. But it was not the psalm of penitence or praise that he loved best to hear; it was the tone of exultation and triumph, or the prophecy of vengeance, that breathes forth in some of the inspired songs of David, which met with corresponding emotions in the breast of the fiery young Jew, and recalled

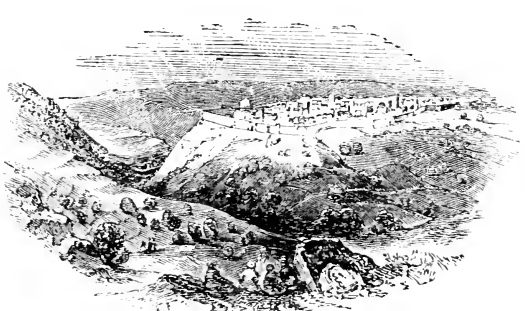
* Numbers xv. 38. † Exodus xiii. 9.

his spirit from its own passions and resentments, to a contemplation of the promised restoration and glory of his nation, and the signal punishment of all their foes.

It was a frequent practice of Zadok, and several other of the most learned of his fraternity, to meet together for the express purpose of studying those parts of the Scriptures which so clearly set forth the future prosperity of the Jews and the reign of the Messiah: and endeavouring to calculate from the various dates which refer to that blessed period, whether the appearance of their King and Saviour might be speedily looked for, according to the popular expectation. At these meetings Javan always attended; and his ardent and enthusiastic notions and wild conjectures called forth the smiles, and sometimes the reproofs, of the graver and more cool-headed rabbin, though they highly commended his zeal, and the industry with which he pursued the study of the Holy Scriptures. He was already a wonderful proficient in the sacred writings which compose the Old Testament, and had transcribed a large portion of them on the rolls of parchment employed at that time as a substitute for books. Zadok was possessed also of several rare and precious manuscripts, which contained the traditions of the Elders, and were regarded by the scribes and Pharisees as of equal, or even superior authority to the inspired Scriptures, and in any disputed case were appealed to in preference to the word of God himself. These were also carefully studied and highly reverenced by his bigoted son, who aspired one day to become an authorised and distinguished expounder of the oral or traditionary law, and to attain the highly-desired title of *Rabbi* or teacher

Into this family, the character of whose members we have attempted to describe, Claudia, the heathen maiden, was removed from the camp of the Roman army, and domesticated as a daughter. It may perhaps excite surprise that her father, being himself an idolater, should permit her thus to associate with Jews; but the fact was

that Rufus was an idolater because he had been brought up as such, and not because he believed the worship of Jupiter or Mars to be more rational than that of Jehovah. His active military life had diverted his attention from such subjects; and provided he acted uprightly in all the relations of life, according to the dictates of his own conscience and the laws of the empire, he did not hold it to be a matter of much importance to what divinity he paid the greatest adoration. He did not wish his daughter to become a Jew; nor did he think it probable that she would be inclined to embrace a religion which appeared to him so burdensome and ridiculous; and therefore he did not oppose her urgent request to return to Jerusalem, on the death of her mother, and seek protection in a family whom he so highly respected and valued.



CHAPTER II.

The day following that on which the conversation we have related took place, was one of great rejoicing in Jerusalem. The noise of military preparation ceased, and the tumults and conflicts which at that period so constantly disturbed the peace of the Holy City were for a short time suspended. It was the Feast of Pentecost, the day on which the first-fruits were presented as a burnt-offering to the Lord, and when the children of Israel celebrated the completion of their plentiful harvest, and "rejoiced before the Lord their God, with their sons and their daughters and their servants, and the Levites and the strangers that were within their gates." This was one of the three great national festivals which were observed every year by the Jews, according to the commandment of God, when all the men were enjoined to assemble from the towns and villages of Judea, and to appear before the Lord in his temple. The disturbed state of the country, and the necessary absence of many of the Jews who had joined the rebel forces of Galilee, or were engaged in preparing for the expected attack of their own cities, rendered the assemblage less numerous than in the time of peace and security; and yet the streets were thronged. The sound of musical instruments was heard in every quarter, and many were the troops of young men and maidens who were seen going up to the temple in the measured and graceful steps of their solemn dances, while they chanted hymns with their melodious voices, and accompanied their songs with the harp and the psaltery

Danger and dissension, and the discord of contending factions appeared to be forgotten, and to the eye of a stranger all was peace and joy. The heart of Naomi exulted while she joined in the dance with her young companions, and among all the youthful throng her step was the lightest and her voice the sweetest; at least they appeared so, in the partial judgment of her mother and her friend, who followed in the concourse that moved towards the glorious and magnificent temple. Claudia took no part in the ceremony; but she could not look unmoved on that countless multitude of worshippers, assembled as with one heart to celebrate the praises of their Deity, and to offer on his altar the first-fruits of the bounteous harvest which had just been gathered in. The exquisite beauty and richness of the building, which was conspicuous from every part of the city and the surrounding country, have been frequently described, and must be familiar to every reader. It rose high above the whole city, and united the strength of a citadel with the splendour of a sacred edifice.

We are told that the plain on which it was erected, and which occupied the whole summit of the hill, had been greatly enlarged since the time of Solomon, and now consisted of a square of a furlong on each side. The steep sides of the rock were faced with stones of an enormous size, some of them being seventy feet long; and we may suppose that it was to these huge blocks so wonderfully placed, and so accurately fitted together, that the disciples called the attention of their Master, when, as they stood over against the temple, they exclaimed in pride and admiration, "Behold what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" The awful denunciation which he then uttered—"There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down"—was now rapidly approaching to its fulfilment, and the hard-hearted and deluded inhabitants of that devoted city knew it not, nor sought to avert the impending judgment

by humiliation and prayer. Doubtless had they even then returned, and sought the Lord, and humbled themselves, like Nineveh in her day of threatened destruction, they might, like Nineveh, have been heard and pardoned, and saved. But the pride and impenitence of the Jews were unexampled, and awful was to be their punishment. They would not be gathered under the wings of their merciful and forgiving Saviour, and lo! their "city was left unto them desolate." The "eagles" were even now "gathering together" to devour them, and they were feasting and rejoicing, and insulting their Maker and Governor, by offering to Him sacrifices while their hands were stained with blood, and uttering praises to His name while their hearts were full of cursing, and deceit, and lies. Amidst the general corruption, there were yet, however, a few faithful sons of Abraham remaining, though not enough to save the city; and Zadok was of this number. He stood by the altar, to receive from the hands of the people the baskets which contained their offerings, and to hear the declaration and confession which were appointed to be uttered on this occasion;* and no covetous or unholy thoughts crossed his breast. He was absorbed in the feelings of gratitude, and hope, and adoration which the ceremony was so well calculated to excite; and his dignified form and noble countenance well became the splendid robes in which as an officiating priest he was attired. Salome looked upon him with love and veneration; and the proud heart of his daughter swelled with a pardonable emotion, as with her young companions she passed before him, and met the affectionate eye of her father. Naomi loved both her parents most ardently; but she looked up to Zadok as to a being of superior nature, whose will to her was law, and whose slightest word could control all her wild thoughts and wayward fancies. "Ah," said she to her mother as she

* Deut. xxvi. 5.

returned to her side beneath the pillared cloisters, when she had completed the circuit of the court in the solemn procession, "if my father were but High Priest, or a chief of one of the parties in Jerusalem, all would yet be well. His wisdom, and courage, and virtue would surely reconcile all the disputes which now cause such tumult, and threaten such danger to our beloved city; and should the Romans dare to bring their legions against our walls, with Zadok for our defender and the leader of our troops, how soon would they be discomfited and driven away! I almost wish to see their boasted armies approach, for then would all the rival factions unite to oppose them, and we should see my father go forth in the power and protection of the Lord, with the holy band of priests, to encounter the foe. And then, O my mother! we should behold Messiah coming in the glory of Heaven to finish the conflict, and to restore to our city and beautiful temple the majesty and power which once dwelt here. I look round this gorgeous building, and I see marble pillars and pinnacles of gold, and carved roofs, and crowded ornaments of precious materials. But where is the presence of God, which once abode visibly among his people, to sanctify them, and to separate them from all others? It has departed from us, and therefore, 'do the heathen so furiously rage together' against us. But it will return—surely His presence will speedily return to us, in the person of the Messiah, and we shall yet see Jerusalem exalted, to be the glory of the whole earth!"

"God grant it, Naomi," replied her less sanguine mother; "but I confess I cannot utter my prayers in this temple, without some awful forebodings that ere long the worship may be interrupted, and even that fire and sword may lay waste our beautiful, our rich, our joyous city. I fear that we may yet have to sink far lower than we are now fallen, and endure to drink far deeper of the cup of the Lord's vengeance before the sin of our race shall be

purged away, and the 'Desire of all nations shall appear to re-establish the kingdom of his father David.'"

"O mother, why are you so fearful, and why do you suffer such thoughts to fill your mind? Can it ever be that Jehovah will allow the Gentiles to triumph over his chosen race, and trample on His courts and altars?"

"We know, Naomi, that the heathen nations of old were permitted to conquer and desolate our city and our temple; and now, when I see the state of impiety and rebellion against the Lord into which my countrymen are fallen, I cannot but look for a repetition of the same awful judgments which have already been poured upon this once favoured land. Have you forgotten the terrible sights and sounds that, two years ago, at the breaking out of this fatal wa , occasioned so much consternation and fear? That dreadful sword of flame which hung, for twelve long months, over the city; that fierce and sudden light which, at the feast of unleavened bread, broke forth about the altar and temple; and how the brazen gate on the eastern side of this sacred building flew open of its own accord, and was closed with so much difficulty by the united force of the guard? Many of our friends looked on this as a token that God would open to us the gate of blessing; but Zadok said not so. He was present at the fearful event, and he came home sad, and with his countenance fallen; for he dreaded that it might be a sign that the temple was no longer secure, and that ere long the gate of the holy place might be thrown open to the enemy."

"But," interrupted Naomi, "my father surely has no such apprehensions now! I hear him speaking encouragement to all around him, and his spirit inspires every one who hears him with hope and confidence."

"Yes, my love, your father is animated by his own courage and his trust in God. The impression which was made upon his mind by the events of which I am speaking has subsided. No calamities immediately suc-

ceeded these warnings, and, like most of his brethren, he now considers that the danger has passed away. But I have not the same conviction; I never can forget those signs from heaven, or believe that they did not forebode evils yet to come. You stood with me upon our house-top when, before sunset, that awful vision of chariots and horsemen appeared in the heavens, and encompassed the city in their wild and rapid course; and you heard your father tell how at Pentecost, when he, with the other priests then on duty, were entering the temple by night, they heard strange rushing sounds, and a movement within, and then a mighty voice, as of a multitude, crying, 'Let us depart hence!' O my child, from that hour I have felt that the Lord has deserted us, and his holy angels no longer keep watch over this sacred building, to guard it from every foe. And look! Naomi, yonder, through the crowd, is passing that terrible and mysterious man who has haunted our city, like an evil spirit, ever since the war began, and indeed while we were yet in peace and prosperity. No threats, no punishments have been able to silence him; and now, when we are met together to hold a feast to the Lord, and celebrate his goodness, the son of Ananus comes to blight our joy, and shed a gloom over every countenance."

As she spoke, this strange and terrific being passed through the midst of the assembled throng, who shrunk from him as from one whose presence brought a curse. He entered the vacant space which surrounded the spot where the priests were officiating, and raising his bare and haggard arms on high, he exclaimed in a voice so loud and piercing as to be heard by all who filled those spacious courts, "A voice from the east!—a voice from the west!—a voice from the four winds!—a voice against Jerusalem, and against the temple!—a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides!—a voice against the whole people!"—and then he moved across the court, and disappeared among the crowd on the opposite side. A

shudder ran through the whole assembly; every voice was hushed, and every eye was turned to follow this prophet of evil. None raise a hand to arrest his course, for all now feared him, and knew that, though when he first appeared in Jerusalem, and uttered his warning cry, he had been scourged until the bones were seen through the flesh, yet that he had never either shrieked or groaned for pain, but still had raised his sad and faltering voice, and cried at every blow, "Woe, woe to Jerusalem!" He was looked upon as a maniac, and now wandered undisturbed through the city, night and day as he traversed the narrow streets still crying, "Woe to Jerusalem!" And at the return of every festival, when crowds were gathered together, and mirth and joy were abroad, his gaunt and melancholy form was sure to be seen gliding slowly through the multitude, and his ominous voice was heard still uttering no other words.

Before the dense crowd which now filled the temple had recovered from the effect which his appearance never failed to excite, he had descended the hill, and was traversing the almost deserted streets; and in the silence which succeeded his departure, his voice could still be heard dying away in the distance in the same melancholy tone. The multitude shortly afterwards dispersed, and the gaiety of the city ceased; for ere the services of the temple were concluded, the chief priests and leaders of the people were hastily summoned to meet in council, and consider a despatch which had just arrived from the commander of the Jewish forces in Galilee. But in order more fully to understand the importance of this despatch, it will be necessary to give a brief sketch of the state of affairs at this time in Judea, and of the events that had occurred since the breaking out of the rebellion, which ended in the total desolation of this unhappy country.

The spirit of insurrection had been abroad for several years, and many attempts had been made to throw off the yoke of the Roman power. The success, however, had

been very partial, and could ill repay the expenditure of blood and life which had been incurred in the misguided efforts of the Jews to regain their liberty and independence. They had no foreign allies to assist and strengthen them, for all the other Roman dominions were in peace; and even their own countrymen who were settled in distant provinces took but little interest in the struggles of their native land, or were too much occupied in endeavouring to secure their own safety, to have either leisure or power to aid in the revolt of Judea. Even their nominal king Agrippa, had openly declared for the Roman power; and the Jews had no acknowledged or distinguished leader to guide them, and direct their fierce and obstinate, but undisciplined troops. The attempt was therefore wild, and all but hopeless; and yet we cannot read the account of the cruelties and oppressions which were heaped upon this once blessed race by many of the Roman governors, and wonder that they should spend their life-blood in the effort to shake off the galling and ignominious yoke. The tyranny which was practised upon them by Cuspius Fadus, by Felix, by Festus, and more especially by Florus, had galled their proud spirit beyond endurance; and in the year of our Lord 66, they were in open rebellion against their conquerors.

The bold defiance of this comparatively weak and insignificant province excited the astonishment and even the alarm of the Emperor Nero, and he immediately dispatched Vespasian, one of his greatest generals, to take the command of Syria, and to use the promptest measures for quelling the revolt, before the example of these daring men should be followed by the surrounding provinces. Vespasian sent his son Titus to Alexandria, to bring from thence the fifth and tenth legions; and set out himself without delay for Syria, collecting by the way all the Roman troops, and the tributary forces from the neighbouring kingdoms.

These active measures on the part of the Roman

emperor struck terror into many of the rebels, who hastened to offer their submission; but the greater part were determined to resist to the uttermost. A general meeting of the chief men in Jerusalem was summoned in the temple, for the purpose of choosing governors and commanders; and Joseph the son of Gorion, and Ananus the high-priest, were elected as governors in the city; while Joseph the son of Mathias (more commonly known as Josephus the historian) was appointed to the command of Galilee; and other chiefs were entrusted with the defence of the remaining districts and cities. Eleazar, the son of Simon, who had been active in the first movements of the insurrection, had no authority committed to him; but being the commander of the temple guard, he contrived to gain possession of a large portion of the public treasures, and the spoils which had been taken from the Romans at the breaking out of the war. He therefore, by means of this wealth, obtained great power and influence over the people; which, as we shall hereafter perceive, he exerted to no good purpose.

Josephus immediately hastened to his government in Galilee, where it was expected that the struggle would first take place. This country was rich and fertile, and inhabited by a numerous and hardy population of Jews and Syrians intermixed. It was divided into two districts, Upper and Lower Galilee, and Sepphoris was the capital city. The fortification of this important place Josephus entrusted to the celebrated John of Gischala, a crafty and deceitful man, but bold, enterprising, and active; and who afterwards opposed all the measures of the governor, and promoted the spirit of discord which already divided the province, and thus proved an obstacle to the effectual resistance of the common foe. Jotapata, Tiberias, and some deep caves near the lake of Gennesareth were also strongly fortified, besides many other towns and fortresses; and an army of 60,000 foot soldiers was established, besides a con-

siderable body of cavalry. But all the wise and prudent schemes of Josephus were constantly rendered ineffectual by the plots and opposition of John of Gischala, whom he himself had raised to power. He had formerly been a poor and desperate adventurer, and lived by robbery and violence: he by degrees induced others as unprincipled as himself to join him, and formed a numerous banditti, who ravaged the country, committing every kind of outrage; and to this dangerous man was entrusted, in the present emergency, the command of the Galilean capital.

For many months the contest and rivalry between John and Josephus continued, and greatly interrupted the defence of the country; and time and money were wasted in mutual endeavours to gain over the chiefs of Jerusalem to espouse the cause of each party. In the metropolis, the preparations for war and defence were carried on with zeal and energy, and the streets and public places echoed with the clash of arms and the tramp of the soldiers marching to exercise. The prudent and the timid trembled at the prospect of the miseries and desolation to which they foresaw their glorious city and luxuriant fields might be ere long devoted; but the fear in which the peaceable inhabitants were held by the zealots the fanatics, and the assassins, who ruled in the city, silenced every murmur, and checked every sigh for the re-establishment of the dominion of the Romans.

By the command of Ananus, the high-priest, the walls were repaired and strengthened, arms and military engines were manufactured, and provisions and other necessary articles were collected, and stored up in abundance, to be ready in case of a siege. It was not only from the timid and disaffected in the city that Ananus experienced coldness, and had to contend; his power was opposed without the walls by Simon, the son of Gioras, who, at the head of a lawless band of ruffians, overran and pillaged the toparchy of Acrabatene, breaking open

the dwellings of the rich, and ill-treating all who endeavoured to put a stop to his deeds of violence and cruelty. The high-priest sent forth a body of troops against him; but the fierce Simon escaped their vengeance, and found safety in the town of Masada, from whence he made incursions into Idumæa.

Thus were the affairs of Judea and Galilee situated when the spring of the year 67 commenced; and Vespasian with his mighty forces appeared at Antioch, and was joined by King Agrippa and his army. On his march toward Ptolemais he was met by an embassy from Sepphoris, with overtures of submission, which, in spite of the opposition of the governor of Galilee, the inhabitants of the capital persisted in making to the invaders; and Vespasian sent them back with a strong reinforcement of troops, under the command of Placidus, to protect the town from the vengeance of the rebel Jews. Josephus made an ineffectual effort to regain possession of the capital; but the attempt only provoked the Romans to greater cruelty, and thousands of the inhabitants of the adjacent country were destroyed by fire and sword, or carried away as captives. At Ptolemais, Titus joined his father with the troops from Alexandria, and the whole army of Vespasian now amounted to 60,000, including cavalry, besides the mixed multitude that followed the camp, many of whom were employed when occasion required.

Josephus saw that it was vain to oppose so formidable an army in the open field, and he sent forth orders for all the inhabitants of the villages to take refuge in the fortified cities. Many were cut off, and slaughtered in the flight; but the greatest part of the population were able to secure their retreat, and found present safety within the walls and bulwarks. The Jewish commander took up his own station at Jotapata, the strongest and most important of all the cities of Galilee; and thither the troops under Placidus were led, in the hope that by

a sudden attack the place might be captured, and the governor himself taken prisoner. But Josephus was aware of this intention, and sallied forth to meet the Romans with such impetuosity that they were repulsed, and forced to retreat; and this success inspired the Jews with fresh courage and determination.

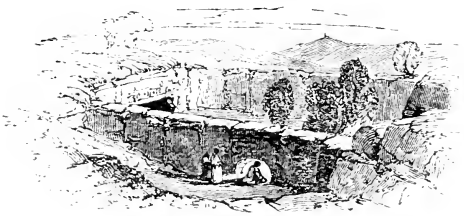
Hitherto the main body of the vast army of Vespasian had been inactive; but he was now resolved to lead them forth himself, and crush the rebellious Jews with his resistless force. The foremost troops consisted of the archers and the light-armed allies, who preceded the cavalry and heavy-armed infantry, examining every thicket and wood, to discover whether the enemy were lurking in ambush. After the cavalry came the pioneers, with their spades and pickaxes, to clear away all obstacles which might interrupt the march of the phalanx; the camp-furniture followed, under a strong guard; then the general and his troop of horse, succeeded by the military engines and their attendant engineers. The lieutenant-generals and their inferior officers came next in order and after them the standards, the glittering eagles, which were looked upon as sacred. To every legion one of these was appropriated, and the attachment of the Roman soldiers to these emblems of their national power was almost invincible. It was inspired both by their religious feelings and their sentiments of honour; and it was looked upon as no less impious than it was disgraceful to forsake the standard in the hour of danger. Next advanced the formidable phalanx, followed by the servants with the private baggage and the mercenary troops; and the procession was closed by a strong guard of both horse and foot. The news of the movement of this host struck terror into the army of Josephus, which was encamped at Garis; and without waiting to encounter the dreaded foe, they dispersed, leaving their general almost in despair: and he was compelled to seek refuge, with the small remnant who adhered to him, in Tiberias.

Gadara was the first city which fell beneath the arms of Vespasian; and he made it a signal example of his vengeance, burning it down to the ground, and destroying all its inhabitants. Consternation was spread abroad, and the retreat of Josephus into Tiberias was looked upon as a proof that even he no longer entertained any hopes of success. But he resolved still to continue his resistance, and sent emissaries to Jerusalem with a strong representation of the necessity of their immediately dispatching a powerful army into Galilee, or of abandoning the cause at once, and submitting to the invaders. It was this important message which reached the metropolis during the celebration of the Feast of Pentecost, and occasioned the sudden dispersion of the assembly. The nature of the communication was speedily noised abroad, and filled the hearts of the timid and peaceable inhabitants with apprehension and anxiety; and even the bravest warriors were somewhat discouraged when they heard how closely Josephus was pressed, and the unfavourable aspect of the affairs in Galilee.

The chief priests and leading men of the city immediately assembled to consult on the best mode of affording assistance to their commander;* but the factions and dissensions of the different parties were already so violent, that, after a long and angry discussion, the council broke up without coming to any final determination; and it appeared to be tacitly agreed, that those who chose to volunteer on the service might go to the aid of their countrymen in Galilee; but no authorised leader was appointed to conduct them. The spirit of Javan was roused with indignation when he heard that no relief was to be sent to Josephus, and he eagerly declared his intention of setting out for the seat of the war. His example and his fiery exhortations induced many of his young

* History does not inform us that any strong reinforcement was sent into Galilee, or that any notice was taken of the letter of Josephus

companions to embrace the same resolution; and as soon as the necessary preparations could be made, they departed from the city, accompanied by the messengers who had brought the Jewish commander's despatches. They reached Tiberias in safety, and joined Josephus in time to accompany him to Jotapata, into which city he contrived, with much difficulty, to throw himself and his followers, when he found that the steps of Vespasian were directed towards that place. A deserter informed the Roman general of this event, which added to his eagerness for the capture of the town, as he hoped at the same time to gain possession of his most active enemy; and he instantly dispatched Ælbutius and Placidus with a thousand horse, to surround the walls and prevent the possibility of his escape. The following day, being the 15th of May, A.D. 67, Vespasian advanced with his whole army; but the particulars of the long and interesting siege of this important post must be deferred for a time, while we return to Naomi and her friends in Jerusalem



CHAPTER III.

The seditions within the city, and the threatened dangers without, had not yet interrupted the regular course of life of the inhabitants, who continued to cultivate their gardens and vineyards, though at times their hearts misgave them that they might not be permitted to gather in the fruits. The garden of Zadok, by the brook Kedron, was one of the most luxuriant in all that fertile vale; and the date and pomegranate-trees, the spreading fig-trees, and graceful vines, afforded a delightful shade from the beams of the summer sun, and provided the family of the priest with a plentiful supply of delicious fruits. This garden was the frequent and favourite retreat of Salome and her daughter, who, with Claudia and some of the female domestics, spent much of their time in training and cultivating the vines that clothed the walls, and securing the boughs that ran along the summit by stones tied to the ends, to prevent the weight of the heavy clusters from bringing them to the ground. The melons and cucumbers, which also grew in abundance on the margin of the stream, required much of their care and attention; and when these occupations were finished, they were accustomed to seat themselves in a shady spot, and pursue some of the domestic manufactures which were usually carried on in every Jewish family. In one corner of the extensive garden was placed the handmill, which was daily worked by the female servants to procure the necessary supply of flour for the consumption of the house; and though the work was very laborious and

fatiguing, the voices of those engaged in it were always heard singing gaily and harmoniously, to lighten their toil. The cheerful sound was accompanied by the monotonous noise of the grindstone, so often alluded to in Scripture, and by the rippling of the water where the brooks of Siloam and Kedron united their streams. All in this favoured spot spoke of peace and happy security; and therefore Salome loved to leave the noisy and tumultuous city, and spend the hours when Zadok was engaged in his public duties in this calm retreat. Here, surrounded by her maidens, she and Naomi directed them in their occupations of spinning and weaving linen, which they sometimes manufactured of a beautiful fineness, notwithstanding the simple construction of their looms and other implements.

In all her domestic labours, Salome was greatly assisted by the faithful Deborah, who was the chief of the female domestics, and had lived all her life in the family of Zadok. She was now in the decline of life, but still active and cheerful, and entirely devoted to the interest of her master. She had nursed and brought up both Javan and Naomi, and loved them with the most intense affection. It must be owned that her indulgence had in no small degree tended to foster the pride and self-will that were so conspicuous in the character of Javan, and, in a less disagreeable form, in that of his sister also; but her intentions were always good, and she would willingly have laid down her own life at any time, if she could by the sacrifice promote the welfare of her beloved charges. They were both sincerely and gratefully attached to her; and Javan never appeared to so great advantage as when, after a temporary absence, he returned to his home, and bent to receive the embraces and blessings of his venerable nurse. But Naomi was her chief comfort and the delight of her life. Her beauty, her grace, her melodious voice, her amiable and animated disposition, and her zeal for the glory of God and the honour of her nation, were

the constant theme of the good old woman's praises, which were frequently lavished, rather injudiciously, in the hearing of Naomi herself; till at length the high-spirited girl almost believed that she was of a superior nature to the rest of her companions, and formed to take the lead among her countrywomen. Salome saw and deplored this great fault in her character, and strove ineffectually to correct it. Her daughter was invariably respectful and affectionate to her and to her father, but the natural pride of her heart was unsubdued. It was to be humbled by means of which Salome never dreamed, and by a power far greater than her maternal exhortations and reproofs.

It chanced one day that Salome had occasion to send Deborah on an errand to the village of Bethany, about two miles distant from Jerusalem; and Claudia being otherwise occupied, Naomi alone accompanied her nurse on the expedition. They left the city by the water-gate, and having crossed the brook Kedron, and passed along the gardens and olive-yards that flourished along its banks, they began slowly to ascend the Mount of Olives. Part of the ascent was steep and fatiguing; and as Deborah leaned on the arm of her active young companion, she recalled to her remembrance the sad time when their pious and glorious King David had also crossed that brook, and mounted by that same ascent, with his head covered and his feet bare, and weeping as he went, a fugitive from his own city, and driven into the wilderness by the cruelty and ambition of his darling son. It must have been a moving sight to behold that once mighty king, now bending beneath the weight of years and bitter sorrows, and shedding tears as he toiled barefoot up the mountain, "while all the people that went with him covered every man his head, weeping as they went up." But tears of greater worth had been shed on that spot, when the "Man of Sorrows" stood on that mount, and beheld the city of Jerusalem, and

wept over it, saying, " O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace!—but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side; and they shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation." This affecting prophecy was unknown by Naomi, and would have been listened to with contempt, as uttered by the despised and crucified Jesus of Nazareth, whose name she had never heard repeated but as that of an impostor and malefactor, the leader of the hated sect of the Nazarenes. She lived, however, to see that very prophecy fulfilled—*awfully* and *literally* fulfilled.

Naomi and Deborah had nearly reached the highest part of the road, from whence a most commanding view was to be obtained of the Holy City, when they observed an aged woman sitting by the roadside, and while her eyes were fixed on the city below, the tears were flowing down her venerable cheeks. There was something in her countenance that attracted the attention of Naomi; and the age and apparent infirmities of this solitary mourner excited in her benevolent heart a strong desire to know the cause of her distress, and if possible to alleviate it. The woman was plainly, but respectably dressed, and had no appearance of poverty or bodily suffering, but it seemed that some melancholy reflections in her own mind had drawn forth her tears. On remarking that the eyes of the young Jewess were fixed upon her with intense curiosity, she hastily attempted to rise, as if to avoid further observation; but the staff on which she leaned for support slipped from her trembling hand, and she would have fallen to the ground, if Naomi had not sprung forward and caught her. She thanked her kindly

and gratefully, and then resuming her staff, she would have proceeded alone; but as it appeared that she also was bending her steps towards Bethany, Naomi insisted on her leaning on her arm, and promised to take care of her as far as the village, where she and her nurse were going.

Deborah did not quite approve of this proposition, as she saw that the old woman moved very slowly, and she found that if they tarried for her it would be very late before they returned to the city; she therefore reminded her young charge that the day was wearing away, and that her mother would be alarmed if she did not return before sunset. But Naomi was not to be turned from her purpose, whether for good or for evil; and on this occasion she was determined not to abandon the aged stranger, for whom she felt a peculiar and increasing interest. She informed Deborah of her intention, begging her to proceed to Bethany, and execute the commission of her mother, while she would remain with her new friend—for such she already felt her to be—and join her nurse on her return.

Deborah had never opposed her, and she saw no necessity for doing so on the present occasion; though, could she have foreseen the ultimate consequences of that meeting, she would doubtless have considered it her duty to exert an unwonted degree of authority, and check the dangerous friendship that Naomi was about to form. But she anticipated no evil from Naomi's exercising towards this infirm old woman the benevolence and kindness that she always showed for those in suffering or distress; and she therefore hastened forward with an activity that was surprising at her time of life, and left Naomi to exert her endeavours to discover the cause of the tears which had so greatly excited her sympathy.

"Will you tell me," she timidly began, for she almost feared to intrude on the feelings of the venerable stranger,—"will you tell me wherefore you are in grief,

good mother? It pains me to see you weep, and I should be so happy if it was in my power to wipe away those tears."

"Bless thee, my child," replied the old woman, with emotion, "these are the kindest words that I have heard addressed to me for many years. I am a solitary being now. All those who loved me best are long ago laid in the grave, and the friends whom I have found in later years have almost all retired to distant and more secure countries. But it was not for this that I wept; my tears were not those of sorrow for my own condition, which I would not change with the happiest and wealthiest in that city; but I wept for those who now dwell there in fancied security, and heed not the ruin that is coming upon them."

"What ruin?" said Naomi; "are you one of those who dread the Roman power, and think that we shall be given into their hands? My mother sometimes gives way to such fears, but it vexes my soul to hear her; for till I see the Gentiles trampling on our holy places I will never believe that they will again be permitted to enter the sacred walls of Jerusalem as conquerors. I should rejoice to hear of the near approach of the Gentile army; for, when all nations are gathered against Jerusalem to battle, then shall the Lord go forth against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.* His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, as our prophet Zechariah has testified; and oh! that I may live to see that glorious day, when Messiah shall at length come upon the earth!"

"Messiah is already come," said the stranger, gently and solemnly.

Naomi started, and turned to gaze on the countenance of the speaker. "What!" she exclaimed, in accents of horror, "are you a Nazarene? Are you a believer in

* Zechariah xiv. 2—4.

that Galilean impostor, who suffered the just recompense of his seditions and deceptions ?"

"I am a humble follower of the Holy Jesus, the Son of the Most High God, *who suffered for our transgressions, and rose again for our justification,*" replied the stranger.

Naomi shrunk back, and dropped the arm of the aged Christian, as if she felt the touch of one who professed that detested creed to be pollution, and words of scorn and contempt rose to her lips. But her better feelings repressed these expressions ; and a sentiment which she could not comprehend drew her again to the gentle and venerable woman, whom in her prejudiced judgment she despised. Again she offered her support to the stranger, and again it was accepted with grateful courtesy, while a benevolent smile lighted up her naturally serious countenance, as she observed the struggle in her young companion's feelings.

"You have been brought up, my daughter, to look upon us as a deluded and despicable sect, who have justly incurred the scorn and punishment that have so heavily been laid upon us, because we have forsaken the religion of our forefathers, and declared our belief that He, whom our chief priests and elders considered worthy of a cruel death, was indeed the Lord Christ, the long-promised Messiah. But there is a frankness in your manner and countenance that convinces me you only continue in this error because you are ignorant of the grounds of our faith, and have been taught to give credit to the false statements invented to excuse the murder of the Lord of Life, and to conceal the wondrous fact of his resurrection from the dead."

"I know," replied Naomi, "that it is said his disciples carried away his body by night, and then declared that he was risen. But who ever saw him alive after his crucifixion ?"

"*I did,*" answered the stranger. "My eyes beheld him surrounded by his disciples; my hands touched his

sacred and human form; my ears listened to his gracious voice, speaking as never man spake; and my heart believed and was comforted. I was with his sorrowing disciples when, on the day of his resurrection, we assembled to mourn over his death, and our blighted hopes; and in fear and trembling, because of the indignation of the Jews against his followers, we had closed the doors on our sad meeting. And then, while consternation filled every breast, He whom we wept as dead suddenly appeared in the midst of us, and said in his well-known voice, 'Peace be unto you.' Only those who were then present can know the feelings of our hearts at this unexpected apparition. We could not believe that it was he himself in bodily form, for our hearts were hardened, and we remembered not the words which he had spoken unto us, that he must be killed, and rise again the third day; and we thought that it was his spirit. But he showed us his hands and his side, so lately pierced by the nails and the spear of his murderers; and then we were glad, for we knew it was the Lord himself. And at other times I saw him, when he took bread, and did eat it before us, that no doubts might remain in our minds as to the actual resurrection of his body. And last of all I saw him, when he led his disciples out as far as to Bethany, and having exhorted them, and comforted them with the promise of his continual presence, he lifted up his hands and blessed them; and then, while every eye was fixed upon him, he rose slowly into the air, and ascended until a cloud received him out of our sight. Oh! how fervently did we then worship our risen and exalted Saviour! And while we yet looked steadfastly toward heaven, as he went up, two heavenly messengers stood by us in shining garments, and said, 'Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven.' Then we knew that he would no more visit the earth in person, until the

latter day; and we returned to Jerusalem, full of joy and thanksgiving."

"Your words are wonderful to me," said Naomi. "I cannot think that you are trying to deceive me; and yet I cannot believe that all these strange things did really take place. I ought not, perhaps, to listen to you; and doubtless, my father, who is a priest of the holy temple, would be greatly displeased if he knew that I was holding converse with a Nazarene; and yet I feel an unaccountable interest in what you have been relating, and a strong desire to hear more of the Christian's faith and the Christian's God. Did you often see this Jesus of Nazareth before he was put to death, and did you then believe in him? I know that his disciples declared that he performed many and wonderful miracles; but our elders say that he worked them by the powers of Beelzebub, like the sorcerers of old. Did you ever witness any of these miracles?"

"Yes, my child, I was so highly favoured as to be present when he performed one of his most merciful and glorious miracles; for I am Mary, the sister of that Lazarus of Bethany whom he raised from the dead, and I beheld my brother come forth from the grave, where he had lain for several days, at the Almighty voice of the Son of God!"

"Oh, tell me that wonderful story," cried Naomi. "I have heard that Jesus did once raise a dead man to life, but I did not believe it; or I thought that if it was really true, yet that it was done by the assistance of evil spirits, or at all events that it was only performed at the command, and by the power of Almighty God, bestowed on him for that particular purpose, as it once was on our great prophet Elijah."

"It is true that the Lord Jesus did restore several persons to life, besides healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, giving sight to the blind, and speech to the dumb, and casting devils out of those who were possessed. But in

all these miraculous works he differed from the prophets and holy men who have in former days been permitted to perform some similar wonders; for they only acted by the command of God, and had no power of themselves to restore the life, and health, and faculties which God alone can give or take away. But Jesus Christ possessed this power in himself, as the eternal Son of the Most High God; and he employed it according to his own most gracious will, saying to the leper, 'Be thou healed;' to the deaf and dumb, 'Be opened;' to the devils, 'I command thee to come out;' to the lame and the palsied, 'Take up thy bed and walk;' and to the dead, 'I say unto thee, arise'—'Lazarus, comeforth!' The wind ceased at his command, and the waves were calm at the sound of his voice; and what was more wondrous still, the hearts of many sinners were changed; and those who had been vile and reprobate became sincere and godly men, living lives of devotion to the honour of God their Saviour, and the good of their fellow-creatures; and at last sealing their faith with their blood, and dying for the sake of Him who had died for them."

The earnestness with which the aged Mary spoke had almost overpowered her, and she stood still and trembled. Naomi, who was profoundly interested in her discourse, and most desirous that she should continue her recital, proposed to her that they should sit down on a grassy bank by the roadside, and there wait the return of Deborah from the village, which was not now far distant; and Mary could proceed thither at leisure, after resting herself from the fatigue of the ascent, and the excitement of speaking on a subject in which her heart was so deeply engaged. She told Naomi that she should wish to proceed a little further on the road before they seated themselves, for that the sacred and interesting spot where her brother had lain in his temporary grave was but a few paces distant; and there, where she herself frequently resorted to meditate on the astonishing event of his resur-

NAOMI, AND MARY THE SISTER OF LAZARUS.

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rection, she would detail to her young friend all the particulars that had marked the transaction.

They accordingly advanced beneath some precipitous rocks that overhung the road on one side, and which were broken by several chasms, extending a considerable depth into the surface. At one of these caves, larger and deeper than the rest, Mary paused, and invited Naomi to descend a few rough steps, that led to a small and rocky area in front of the cavern where the body of Lazarus was laid. Here, in full view of the dark sepulchre, they sat down on a fallen mass of stone, while Mary related to her attentive auditor the scenes that were indelibly impressed on her own memory.

"You will not wonder, my dear young friend," she said, "at the warmth with which I speak of the blessed Jesus, when I tell you of all his mercy and love towards me and my brother and sister. He often retired to Bethany from the noise and crowd of the city, and our house was honoured by being made his home. The light of his countenance shed joy and peace over our dwelling, and his words were as heavenly music, to which we could have listened for ever. Oh! it was a blessed privilege to sit at his feet, and hear his words, and receive the divine instruction that flowed from his gracious lips. It was in the month Tisri,* a few days after our beloved Master had spent a day in our humble dwelling on his return into the country from attending the feast of tabernacles, that our brother Lazarus fell sick, and we soon perceived that his sickness was mortal. My sister and I were in deep distress; but we remembered the power and love of Jesus, and we delayed not to send a messenger to Bethabara, beyond Jordan, where we knew that he abode at that time. We could not doubt his willingness to succour us in our affliction, for he loved Lazarus, and he loved us also. Therefore we only

* The Hebrew month answering to a part of our September and a part of October.

sent to him, saying, 'Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick;' and we were fully convinced that he would instantly return to us and heal our brother. But our messenger had not long been gone when a fearful change took place in Lazarus. The fever increased, the struggles of death came on, and in anguish and despair we saw our only, our beloved brother expire! Did not Jesus know what was passing beneath our humble roof at Bethany? And could not he, who had performed so many miracles, have stayed the hand of death, and restored Lazarus to health with one word of his mouth? Such were the thoughts of our faithless hearts while weeping over the bed of death, and preparing for the hasty burial which is customary and necessary in this climate.

"The place where Jesus then abode was a day's journey from Bethany; and Lazarus was laid in his cold grave almost at the moment when our messenger reached him who we hoped would come and heal him. The following day we expected to see our Lord arrive, if not to restore our brother, yet to comfort our bleeding hearts with his words of grace and love. But the messenger returned alone; and the reply which he brought us only weakened our expiring faith. Jesus had said to him, 'This sickness is not unto death,' and yet Lazarus was in the grave—what could we believe? what could we hope?

"Two more days, long melancholy days, passed away, and we sat mourning in our house, once the abode of happiness, and peace, and brotherly love—now gloomy and silent, save when the cry of the mourners, who sat with us on the ground, burst forth in a wild and sudden wail, and caused our tears to flow afresh. Many of our friends had come from the city to comfort us; but their sympathy brought us no relief, for our brother was dead, and Jesus had forsaken us; and all the consolation that Christians may *now* feel in the knowledge that

Christ has purchased for them life and immortality, was but dimly understood by us. We had an uncertain hope that hereafter we should meet our brother in a happier world, and that Jesus would, with his own blood, wipe away all our sins and all our sorrows for ever. While we sat bowed down with grief, we heard a sound as of a distant multitude. The noise approached, and we soon perceived that Jesus and his disciples were drawing near the town. How anxiously had we watched and waited for that sound during the sad days that preceded our brother's death! But now it came too late —our faithless hearts dared not to indulge a hope that Lazarus should live again. Nevertheless Martha rose hastily, and went forth to meet our Lord, but I did not go with her; I sat still in the house, oppressed with sorrow. Soon she returned to me, and whispered softly, 'The Master is come, and calleth for thee,' and quickly I rose and went unto him; for he was still in the place where Martha met him, outside the town. When I saw his kind and gracious countenance, and thought on all his power and all his love, my grief and disappointed hopes overpowered my feelings of veneration and respect; and falling down at his feet, I exclaimed in the bitterness of my spirit, 'Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died!' It was a sinful murmur, but the merciful Jesus saw only the sorrow that dictated it, and did not reprove me; nay more, he sympathised in our human sufferings, and when he saw me weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with me, he groaned aloud, and his countenance was troubled, and he said, 'Where have ye laid him?' We said to him, 'Lord, come and see;' and we led him towards this spot. Jesus wept! Yes, my child, he who had power over earth and heaven, the eternal Son of God, shed tears of sorrow for the death of his friend. He knew that that death would soon be chased away; he knew that at his word the dead would rise and all our grief would

be swallowed up in joy, but yet he wept at the sight of human misery and woe. At length we reached the sepulchre; a large stone was placed before that cave which contained the body of Lazarus, and Jesus commanded us to remove it. Still did we not believe his gracious intentions; and my sister remonstrated against the stone being taken away, as she feared that ere that time putrefaction had begun, and that the remains of our dear brother were a prey to the worms. But Jesus gently reminded her of what he had said to her when first she went forth to meet him, saying, 'Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?' Then did hope once more animate our breasts, and in breathless anxiety we watched to see the end. When the heavy stone was taken away, there lay the lifeless corpse wrapped in grave-cloths. Jesus lifted up his eyes, and praised his heavenly Father; and then in a loud voice he cried, 'Lazarus, come forth!' What a thrill passed through the heart of every one of those who stood by, when from that dark cave we saw the dead arise and come forth endued with life! At the command of Jesus we hastily took away the cloths in which his hands and feet and face were bound, and beheld once more the beloved countenance of our brother, beaming with the same tender affection that was ever wont to animate it. I will not attempt to describe to you the joy and gratitude that filled our hearts, or the wonder that struck upon all who had witnessed this miracle. Many henceforth believed in Jesus, and this day was to them the beginning of life and eternal salvation: but some there were who could not be convinced, even by what they had seen, that Jesus was the Christ; and they went and told his deadly enemies the Pharisees, who were jealous of every wonderful work that he performed, and feared that the people should believe on him."

"Oh!" cried Naomi, "is it possible that any could

behold such proofs of his power and his goodness, and yet seek to betray him into the hands of those who hated him! I am filled with wonder and amazement at all you have told me; and I am almost tempted to believe that he was indeed Messiah. But then wherefore was he poor, and despised, and forsaken, and crucified? Wherefore did he not crush all his enemies, and take unto himself his great power, and reign over Judah?"

"I could reply to all those objections, my daughter," replied Mary, "but time will not now permit me. I see your companion coming towards us from the village, and my own strength is exhausted. I cannot recall the feelings of that blessed period of my life without deep emotion; but should we ever meet again, how gladly would I renew the subject, and endeavour to deepen the impression that I see is already made on your young heart."

"Oh that I could meet you often," said Naomi, "and hear more about Jesus of Nazareth. I never felt so deeply interested on any subject, and I cannot endure to think that I may hear of it no more. I almost tremble to propose it, as I know how heavy would be my father's displeasure if I were discovered;—and yet I am resolved to brave it. Will you let me come to your home, when I can do so unsuspected? and will you then let me listen to all that you can tell me? My parents are good and indulgent, and I would not deceive them for any other purpose; but I feel that there is something in your story that concerns my soul, and God will pardon my disobedience, while I am seeking to know his will."

We have said that Naomi was self-willed and impetuous: her feelings were ardent and uncontrolled; and in proportion to the contempt she entertained for the Nazarenes while she was ignorant of the character of Him whom they worshipped, was the admiration she now felt when that character was in some degree displayed to her, and the eagerness of her determination to know more of this gracious and glorious Being. She

clasped her hands, and fixed her bright black eyes on Mary's countenance with a look so earnest and imploring, that the aged disciple saw the work of God was begun in her heart, and she doubted not that the work would be completed. She felt it to be a sacred duty to endeavour to snatch this young creature from the errors and prejudices which now obscured her mind, and lead her into the pure light of the Gospel, even though the pious effort was in opposition to the will of her mistaken parents. By the blessing of God, the conversion of their child might be the means of calling them also out of darkness into His marvellous light. She therefore readily consented to receive her young friend whenever she could contrive to visit her, and exhorted her to caution and circumspection, as otherwise danger might befall them both.

"For myself," she added, "it little matters how soon the worn-out thread of my life is severed; but I would not willingly shorten an existence which I may spend in my Master's service, though to depart and be with Christ would be much better. And you, I trust, my child, may have many years before you, in which to honour God, and serve his Son Jesus Christ. I cannot but believe that you will be brought to a knowledge of his name, and be an active and devoted servant of him whom once you hated and despised. Farewell, and may the blessing of the God of Israel be with you, and the grace of his Son Jesus Christ descend upon your heart."

Mary arose, and Naomi took her hand, which she kissed affectionately and respectfully, and then they advanced slowly to meet Deborah, who was hastening towards them with considerable speed.

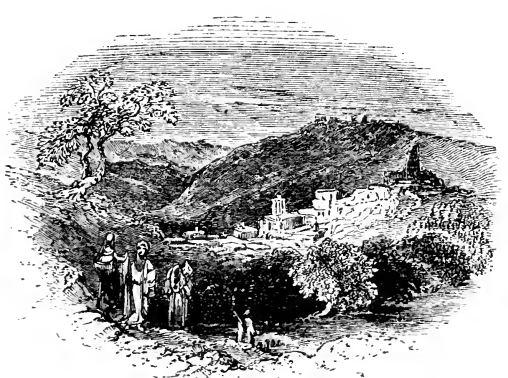
"I fear," she exclaimed, "that I have kept you very long. I thought you would have entered the village ere this, and would have been tired of waiting for me; but I was detained much longer than I expected: and now we must hurry homewards, or your mother will be alarmed;

and Zadok too will be displeased with me for keeping you out so late, if he returns from the evening service in the temple and finds you are not yet at home."

"Is Zadok the priest your father then?" asked Mary, with some anxiety; for she knew the strictness of his character as a Pharisee, and his abhorrence of the Christian name, and she feared that her young friend's dawning faith might be put to a severe trial, and even be extinguished, if Zadok ever obtained knowledge of it.

"Yes," replied Naomi, "I am his daughter, and I glory in saying so; for whose character stands so high as that of Zadok? and who is so kind and so good a father as Zadok? I would that you knew him, Mary."

"God bless you," again said the old woman; and they separated. She slowly bent her steps towards her humble home at Bethany, and lifted up her heart in fervent prayer for the soul of Naomi, who, with her nurse, rapidly descended the mount, crossed the brook, and entering the city, soon reached the abode of Zadok.



CHAPTER IV.

From the lofty battlements of Jotapata, Josephus and his officers watched the close and endless files of the Roman army slowly advancing along the straight and level road that led to the city walls, and which had been formed by the pioneers of Vespasian. It was a fearful array of tried and valiant troops, led on by the most celebrated general of the time. The Jews had relied on their inaccessible position, their steep and rugged mountains, and the deep forests that surrounded their fortress, for security. What, therefore, was their astonishment and consternation when they saw the lofty trees falling around them, the rocks removed, the mountains cut through, and Vespasian with his whole army stationed on a hill within a mile of the city! The garrison were terror-struck, and retired behind their walls; while the Romans, though weary with their long march, and unprepared for an immediate assault, employed themselves in drawing a triple line of circumvallation round the city; so that every chance of escape for the cowardly, who might wish to attempt it, was effectually cut off. Finding that retreat was hopeless, the whole garrison recovered their wonted valour, and resolved to hold out to the uttermost, and fight while life remained. Their fierce resistance and stubborn resolution have seldom been equalled.

The following day they boldly left the shelter of their walls, and, pitching their camp before the trenches, advanced to meet the foe; and though galled by the archers and slingers of the Roman army, they made so vigorous

a sally, that the assailants were driven down the hill. The battle was continued with desperation, until the darkness of night compelled them to separate, when Josephus led his troops back to their stations. Young Javan and his companions distinguished themselves by their determined bravery, which was not unobserved by the Jewish commander; and henceforth he stationed them near his own person, and employed Javan on many important occasions.

The city was built on the summit of a lofty hill, and on three sides was surrounded by ravines, so deep and rugged as to be quite impassable. It is said that the depth of the chasm was in some parts so profound, that, when looking from the summit of the walls, the eye could not reach the bottom. On these three sides, therefore, Vespasian could not hope to gain an entrance; but, on the north side, the city was more accessible, as the hill sloped gradually down from the walls; and here he resolved to raise a great embankment, from the top of which his men could discharge their missiles into the thickest ranks of the besieged. The whole army laboured at this work, defending themselves from the javelins and arrows of the Jews by a roof of wicker-work that was stretched over the workmen, and was strong enough even to resist the great stones that were hurled down by their enemies. To clear the walls of these assailants, Vespasian brought his military engines to bear on that point; and soon the stones and javelins discharged by the balistæ and catapults, and the yet more fearful balls of fire and flaming arrows, fell among the garrison in showers. The battlements were deserted in that quarter, but the Jews were not disheartened. They descended from the walls, and stole out in small parties on the workmen, destroying their breastworks, and wounding many of those who had laid aside their armour. But notwithstanding all their efforts to prevent it, the embankment was at length completed, and brought almost to a level with the height of

their own walls, and their only resource was to raise the battlements so as to command the works of the enemy To effect this, Josephus ordered strong poles to be fixed on the top of the walls, and on these a sort of curtain was fixed, of the hides of cattle, behind which the soldiers could work in safety; and they succeeded in raising the walls upwards of thirty feet. He also erected several towers, and otherwise strengthened the fortifications, to the astonishment and dismay of the Romans, who had flattered themselves that they should soon be masters of the city.

They knew not yet the courage and obstinacy of the Jews, or the ability and cunning of Josephus and his officers. Numerous were the sallies by which they annoyed their besiegers, sometimes even setting fire to the works they had but just erected, and destroying them. On one of these occasions, Javan led forth a small party of chosen men, and rushing upon the breastworks that concealed the enemy, they succeeded in tearing down a considerable portion, and wounding several Roman soldiers, without themselves receiving any injury; when the centurion who held the command of that band of men, hearing the conflict, hastened to their assistance and quickly restored order. He marshalled his men, and led them forward from the breastworks with so much impetuosity, as entirely to check the assailants; and directing his attack towards the young Jewish leader, Javan recognised his old friend Rufus. The centurion remembered him, and for his father's sake he forbore to press his advantage. He would not take the son of Zadok prisoner, or willingly injure him, though now an enemy; and he allowed him and his followers to escape unhurt to the walls. Javan did not imitate his generous forbearance; but as he fled he turned back, and cast a javelin at his former friend with such strength and fury as to shiver a portion of the armour in which he was encased, and inflict a slight wound in his side.

"Ha!" cried Rufus, "my mercy was ill-bestowed. I see that the same cruel and ungenerous spirit yet lives in that young fanatic. Forward, my brave men, and teach him that it was not because we feared him that we drew back." The Romans swiftly obeyed the word of their commander, and overtook the retreating party as they reached the foot of the wall. The portal from whence they had sallied forth was closed; and ere it could be opened by those within, a fierce struggle had begun. Several of the combatants on either side fell dead, or severely wounded; and Javan received a serious injury in his right arm, that left him defenceless, and exposed to the sword of his antagonist. The Roman who had inflicted the wound was about to strike at him with his short, double-edged blade, and his fierce spirit would have been quenched for ever; but at that moment a party of the garrison who had ascended the walls hurled down a massive stone that struck the uplifted arm of his assailant, and threw him with violence to the ground.

"The Lord strikes for his people!" shouted Javan; and snatching up the sword which had fallen to the earth, he with his left hand plunged it to the heart of his foe. Then turning away, he rushed through the now open door, leaving his party to follow him as they could. Similar skirmishes were often repeated, but they led to no important results; and Vespasian determined at length to blockade the city, and endeavour to reduce it by famine, since all his assaults proved ineffectual. He therefore ordered his troops to remain quiet in their quarters, and await the time when, reduced to starvation, the garrison would either surrender, or fall a more easy conquest to their renewed attacks.

The city contained a large supply of every necessary except water; but there was no spring within the walls, and the small quantity of rain-water that could be obtained was quite inadequate to the wants of the garrison

and the rest of the inhabitants. This was measured out in very scanty portions, and after the blockade had been continued for some days, many began to faint beneath the severe privation, added to the fatigue they endured, and the fever that parched up the wounded and the sick. The Romans discovered their distress, and hoped for a speedy surrender; but the wily Josephus resolved to baffle their calculations, and he ordered a number of his men to dip their clothes in water, and then hang them over the walls, so that the moisture ran down; and the besiegers could no longer believe that the garrison were in want of water, when they could waste so much unnecessarily. Vespasian therefore resolved to renew the assault, which was exactly what the Jews desired, for it was better to perish by the sword than to die of thirst or famine.

Notwithstanding the close blockade kept up by the Romans, Josephus still contrived to keep up a communication with his friends without the city, by means of a narrow and rugged path down the bed of a torrent. It was so precipitous and dangerous that the Romans left it unguarded; and by this difficult way the messengers of the Jewish commander crept forth on their hands and knees, covered with skins of animals, and thus bearing letters to other towns, and bringing back many articles of great service to the besieged. But at length this was discovered, and all further exit by this passage was prevented. Josephus now began to despair of success, and even held a council with the chief persons in the city as to the possibility of effecting their own escape. This was discovered by the inhabitants, and they hastened to throw themselves at his feet, imploring him not to abandon them to the Roman vengeance. He was moved with pity at the sight of the terrified multitude of men, women, and children kneeling before him, and consented to relinquish his selfish purpose; and seizing the moment when they were filled with gratitude, he exclaimed,

"Now is the time, then; if there is no hope of safety let us exert our utmost courage, and let us at least die nobly, and leave behind us a glorious example!" The most courageous of his soldiers gathered round him, and they rushed forth, carrying fire and sword into the enemy's lines. For three days these fierce sallies were repeated, and kept up a constant state of watchfulness and alarm in the Roman camp.

Vespasian, weary of this desultory warfare, now ordered the battering-ram to be brought against the walls. This tremendous engine was composed of an enormous beam of wood, terminating in the head of a ram, cast in iron; this was hung by ropes from another strong beam, supported by four tall posts. When it was required to exert its terrible force, it was drawn backwards by a number of men, and then driven forward with a shock, against which scarcely any wall could resist. This dreadful machine now slowly advanced against the walls of Jotapata, and the smaller engines commenced a quick discharge of stones and darts, to drive the Jews from the walls. Then began the thundering blows of the battering-ram, and the walls shook to their foundation. A cry rose from the city, for all the inhabitants believed that the Romans were even now entering their streets. Still was Josephus able to parry this new danger. He ordered a great number of bags to be stuffed with chaff, and suspended on the face of the wall, so as to meet and break the force of the ram; and this scheme entirely succeeded, to the great astonishment of the Romans. They however continued to sever the ropes to which the bags were tied, by means of sickles fastened to long poles, and then they recommenced their work of destruction. But the Jews rushed forth from their gates in three bodies, armed with flaming torches and every combustible they could seize. They set fire to the engines and the palisades, and drove back their assailants, who were confounded by the fire and smoke.

Among the foremost was the fierce Javan, brandishing a flaming brand in his left hand, and carrying destruction and dismay wherever he turned. All the endeavours of the Romans to save their works were ineffectual; they suffered a great loss of men in the engagement, and all that had cost them such labour and ingenuity to erect was in less than one hour reduced to ashes.

One man among the Jews distinguished himself by an act of desperate courage, that has made his name memorable even to the present time. This was Eleazer, the son of Samæas, a Galilean, who standing on the wall at the time of the furious sally made by Josephus, took up an enormous stone, and hurled it at the head of the battering-ram with such force, that it broke off, and fell to the ground. He then descended from the wall and rushed forth into the midst of the enemy, and seizing on the ram's head, carried it off in triumph. The Romans, filled with indignation, cast at him a shower of darts and arrows, five or six of which entered his body: he nevertheless still bore off his prize, and carried it to the top of the wall, where he undauntedly showed himself and his trophy to the infuriated foe. But the wounds he had received were mortal, and sinking beneath them, he fell from the wall with the head of the ram still grasped in his dying hands. His heroic example animated his comrades with fresh courage, and they succeeded in destroying all the engines, and coverings, and breastworks of the fifth and tenth legions, which, notwithstanding their high reputation for bravery and discipline, had fled, confounded by the fierce desperation of their assailants, and blinded by the smoke and flame.

Still the Romans were not discouraged; and in the dusk of the evening they once more erected their terrible battering-ram against that part of the fortifications that was already shaken by its force; but during this operation one of the besieged cast a javelin from the wall, and pierced the neck of Vespasian. The Romans seeing their

general wounded, were greatly discouraged, and his son Titus betrayed the deepest concern and alarm; but his father quickly removed their fears, and reappearing among his troops, those who had fled in dismay returned to their duty with fresh animation, and showed a determination to brave every danger in the hope of revenging the insult offered to their beloved general; and with a unanimous shout of defiance, they rushed upon the wall. The stones, darts, and arrows flew in showers upon the besieged, and many fell beneath the deadly strokes; yet others pressed forward to take their places, and in their turn poured fire and stones and pieces of iron upon the besiegers, who worked beneath their hurdles. The fires that burnt around shed a lurid light on this work of death, and guided the aim of the Jews on the walls; but the Romans were unable to distinguish their enemies above them. Nevertheless they continued to pour forth their missiles; and so vast were the stones that were thrown by the balistæ, and so resistless was their force, that they broke through the thickest ranks of the defenders, and striking against the towers and inner walls, brought down heavy pieces of masonry upon the crowds around. One man who stood between Javan and the Jewish commander had his head torn from his shoulders, and carried away to the distance of three furlongs. That was indeed a fearful night. The terrible and continued noise of the engines, the shouts of the soldiers, the screams of the women and children in the city, the groans of the wounded and dying, and the heavy crash of armour on the wall as the slain fell one upon another, formed a deafening and discordant sound that can hardly be conceived, and which was echoed back from the surrounding mountains; while the blood ran in streams from the walls, and stood in pools around their base. Until the morning watch the walls stood firm; but then they yielded before the battering-ram, and a breach was formed. Vespasian gave his wearied men a short respite

before he led them on to storm the breach; then posting a strong body of cavalry entirely covered with armour at the foot of the wall, he commanded the infantry to apply the scaling-ladders. Josephus was not idle within; he stationed the least efficient of the garrison on those parts of the walls that were not immediately threatened; but all the best and bravest he disposed in front of the breach; and in the most perilous situation of all he stationed himself and Javan and four others, with directions to stop their ears against the noise of the legionaries, and receive their darts on their bended knees, with their shields locked together over their heads, until their quivers were exhausted, and then to sally forth and fall upon them with all their collected rage, and fight for their lives and their liberties, and those of their wives and children and aged parents. The women seeing the dreadful preparations on either side, gave themselves up for lost, and one wild dismal cry of anguish and despair burst from the crowded streets; but Josephus dreading the effect of their grief and consternation on the soldiers, ordered them all to be locked up in the houses, and with severe threats commanded them to be still.

Now the trumpets sounded for the charge, and the Romans gave a mighty shout, at the same moment sending upon the besieged such a cloud of arrows and darts that the air was darkened. Josephus's brave companions followed his directions, and stopped their ears to the sound, and defended their bodies from the darts. But as soon as the engines had played, and ere the engineers could renew the charge, they sallied forth upon them resolving to slay or be slain, and were followed by many other parties animated with the same desperate resolution. But the Romans at length drove them back, and succeeded in getting a footing on the wall. Josephus had now recourse to stratagem in this extremity, and ordered a quantity of oil to be heated, which, being quickly prepared, was poured in a boiling state on their

assailants, and penetrating through the joints of their armour, burnt through their flesh, and maddened them with agony, so that, being unable to tear off their armour, they turned back and fled away, carrying confusion among their comrades; and many of them fell headlong from the narrow bridges by which they had passed to the walls from their embankment. The Jews also poured boiled fenugreek, a kind of herb, on the planks and bridges by which their enemies ascended, and thus made them so slippery that it was impossible for them to stand upright, and many fell with violence to the ground, and in that situation were struck at by those on the walls.

In the evening, Vespasian was forced to call off his discomfited men, of whom a great number were wounded, besides those who lay dead on the field. The loss of the Jotapateans was considerably less, and they were greatly encouraged by the result of that day. The Romans now commenced raising their mounds to a greater height, and also erected three strong and lofty towers, in which were placed bowmen and slingers to keep up a perpetual annoyance of the garrison; and they in their turn made frequent sallies, with no decisive effect, until, on the forty-seventh day of the siege, the enemy raised their works above the level of the walls, and looked down upon the devoted inhabitants. On that same fatal day, treachery effected what force and valour had so long failed to accomplish. One dastardly man was found mean enough to creep out of the city and desert to Vespasian, and inform him of the weak and distressed state of the garrison and the inhabitants of Jotapata. He urged him to make a sudden attack upon the place during the last watch of the night, when, worn out with fighting and watching, the garrison would be in a profound sleep, and even the sentinels would probably be slumbering also, so weary and faint were they now become. At first Vespasian doubted the traitor's story,

and thought it was only a stratagem of Josephus to ensnare him; and this suspicion was strengthened by the fidelity and constancy which had hitherto been displayed by the Jotapateans who had fallen into their hands. One man had even endured the sharpest torments by fire, which had been applied by the Romans to induce him to disclose the secrets of the garrison; and, smiling at their cruel efforts, had afterwards patiently sustained the tortures of crucifixion. Vespasian, however, believed that the consequences to his mighty army could be but trifling, even if he were deceived; he therefore kept the deserter in close custody, and gave orders for attacking the city.

At the hour mentioned by the traitor, his troops advanced silently to the walls, and Titus led a small party of the fifth legion to the summit. Here they instantly slew the sentinels before an alarm could be raised, and then quietly entered the city, followed by Placidus and Sextus Cerialis, with Rufus the centurion, and the men under their command. They seized upon the citadel, and, favoured by a thick mist and the drowsiness of the inhabitants, they were in the very heart of the city before the garrison had been aroused to their danger. The entrance of the whole Roman army then showed them the extent of their misfortune, and the furious and indiscriminate slaughter which commenced proved that their enemies remembered all they had suffered in the siege, and were determined to revenge it. They charged down from the citadel, hewing down all who opposed them, and driving the terrified inhabitants into the narrow streets and lanes, where they fell an unresisting prey to their enemies, while many were pushed over the steep precipices by the force of the crowd behind them, and dashed to pieces. A few of the most resolute gathered round Josephus, and several of them, seeing the hopelessness of their situation, died by their own and by each other's hands, rather than be slain by the enemy.

A party of the guard fled to a tower, and there made some resistance; but they were soon surrounded and forced to surrender; and the Romans became entire masters of the celebrated city of Jotapata, with the loss of but one of their men. This was a centurion named Antonius, who was slain by an act of cunning. One of the Jews, who had taken refuge in a cave, held out his hand to him, promising to surrender if he would assist him to clamber out. Antonius took his hand, and at that moment the other struck him through the throat with his spear and killed him instantly.

The city was given up that day to a general slaughter, and all who were seen in the houses and streets were put to the sword. The following day a strict search was made in the caves and hiding-places, where multitudes had taken refuge, and of these the men were slain, and the women and children reserved as prisoners. About twelve hundred were collected to be carried away into captivity, and it is supposed that nearly forty thousand were slain from the commencement of the attack on the city. Vespasian then ordered the city to be burnt to the ground, and all its boasted towers and walls were quickly reduced to ashes.

Josephus had been sought for in vain during the carnage; no pains were spared to discover and capture him, who was the chief object of the siege, and who had excited the resentment of the Romans and their general by the obstinacy of his resistance. On the taking of the city, when he saw that all other hope of safety was gone, he had leaped down a dry well, from the bottom of which he knew that a long passage led to a subterranean cave, entirely concealed from the view of those above. Here he found forty men of consequence and note, and among them his young friend Javan, who had all sought refuge in this secure retreat, and with them was one woman, the wife of a citizen of the party. These persons had hastily collected, and carried down to the cave, a suf-

ficient quantity of provisions to sustain them for several days; and Javan being separated from his general, and hopeless of any success by further resistance, had joined them, and shared their place of concealment. Josephus remained in the cave during the day, but at night he ascended, accompanied by Javan, and sought to effect his escape; but finding every avenue strictly guarded, he was compelled to return to the cave. The third night he was attended by the citizen's wife, who promised to point out to him a secret way by which he could escape; but she had deceived him, and as soon as she had conducted him within hearing of the sentinels, she fled from him, and betrayed to the soldiers where he made his hiding-place. This was immediately made known to Vespasian, who sent two tribunes, named Paulinus and Gallicanus, to persuade him to surrender. He had returned to the cave, and was startled by hearing his own name loudly called from the top of the well; and the tribunes proceeded to deliver to him their general's offer of mercy. But Josephus had no dependence on the mercy of the Romans, and refused to come up, till Vespasian sent another tribune, named Nicanor, with whom he was well acquainted, and who, by various arguments and promises, at length induced him to consent.

But the Jews, who were in the cave with him now opposed this resolution, and reproached him severely for his cowardice and fear of death, which could induce him to give himself up voluntarily to the Romans. They reminded him how often he had exhorted them to die rather than submit to their enemies, and how many of their fellow-citizens and soldiers had already done so; and they declared that if he could forget his own honour, they would take care that he did not disgrace their country. They therefore gave him his choice, whether he would die nobly and voluntarily by their hands, and be for ever remembered with honour as

the valiant general of the Jews, or persist in his intention and be slain as a traitor, which they declared should be his fate the moment he attempted to go forth to the tribunes. And, saying this, they surrounded him with their naked swords, and awaited his reply.

Josephus now exerted all his wonted eloquence, in the effort to save his own life, and to persuade his companions to join him in surrendering to the conquerors. But however ingenious his arguments and powerful his appeals, they failed to move his auditors, who were only the more enraged at him, and rushed against him with their swords. He stood like a wild beast at bay, parrying the strokes of some, calling on others by name, entreating, commanding, imploring.

"Javan!" he cried, "do you join to murder your general? you, who have fought so bravely by my side, and gloried in my approbation. If these Galileans would take away my life, will you, a true-born Jew, desert me?"

Javan regarded him at that moment with a feeling of pity and contempt. He dropped his sword, and his example was followed by the rest, some of whom still entertained a regard for the general, who had hitherto displayed such wisdom and courage in the defence of their town. He seized the favourable moment, and exclaimed, "If you are resolved to die, let us cast lots who shall first be slain. Thus each will suffer death in turn; and yet none incur the guilt of dying by his own hand. It would be dishonourable in me to survive, if all the rest are determined to perish." This proposal was readily acceded to, for all believed that Josephus would share the same fate with themselves. The lots were cast, and one by one these undaunted men offered their breasts to the sword of him who was doomed to be his executioner. Whether by chance, or, which is more probable, by artifice, so it was that the lot fell not on Josephus, until all were slain except himself and one

other. That other was young Javan; and his fierce spirit did not shrink from enduring the death which he had just inflicted on the last of his companions. But his general felt equally repugnant thus in cold blood either to slay a fellow-creature, or to submit to the stroke of death from him; and promising him his future friendship, he at length so worked on the young man's feelings and natural love of life, that he agreed to ascend with him and submit to the promised clemency of Vespasian.

Nicanor immediately led them to the general, while all the Romans crowded round to obtain a sight of this distinguished man. Many from a distance cried out that he should be punished with death; but those who stood near, and regarded his fallen countenance, were touched with pity for his misfortunes, and admiration of his great and noble exploits; and Titus, above all the rest, was filled with sympathy for the captive. He persuaded his father to grant Josephus his life; but he was kept closely guarded, and it was supposed he would be sent immediately to Rome to the Emperor Nero. Josephus dreaded this event, and in the hope of avoiding it, he entreated a private interview with Vespasian; and all having withdrawn, except Titus and two other friends, he declared that it was not from a love of life that he had given himself up to the Romans, but because he was commissioned to announce to Vespasian and his son that they were appointed to succeed to the imperial dignity. He then implored that he might not be sent to Nero, but be kept in chains, if it was thought necessary, until his prediction was fulfilled; for he acknowledged, that if he should be found guilty of having deceived his conqueror in the name of the God of Israel, he should deserve a worse punishment than captivity.

Vespasian was struck with the prophetic promises of the captive; yet suspecting his sincerity, he asked him how it was that if he could foretell future events, he had

not foreseen the fall of Jotapata and his own captivity, and sought to avert the calamity. Josephus replied that he had repeatedly warned the Jotapateans of their coming fate, and told them that they would hold out the siege for forty-seven days, when they would be conquered, and he himself taken prisoner. On this declaration the Roman general caused inquiry to be made among the prisoners as to its truth; when they asserted that such prophecies had actually been pronounced by their leader. Whether this was really the case or not, we cannot now determine; but it had the effect of impressing on Vespasian's mind the prediction of his own future greatness; and though he did not set the prophet at liberty, he treated him with great kindness, and made him several valuable presents. Javan also was kept in strict captivity with the other prisoners who were reserved either for sale or as domestic slaves to their conquerors. The rough but kind-hearted Rufus visited him frequently, and took many opportunities of adding to his comforts, and enlivening his spirits by his conversation and encouragement. But he could not resist reminding Javan of the unworthy return he had once made to his forbearance and friendship, when he wounded him so ungratefully after his sally from the walls. "Methinks," he said, "that the generosity and virtue of one whom you call a heathen, has shown itself to be superior to the boasted religion of the Jews; for I forgive you, and come to your relief, and you sought to slay me at the moment when I forbore to injure you."

This reproach cut the proud self-righteous Pharisee to the heart, but he could not reply to it; and Rufus changed the subject, to talk to him of their mutual friends at Jerusalem.

Would to God there were among ourselves no nominal Christians, who by their cruel and vindictive, or otherwise unchristian spirit, give occasion to the enemies of

our holy religion to speak evil of that which they profess, but do not follow. But even as they were not true children of Abraham, who trusted to themselves that they were righteous,—and, while indulging pride and cruelty, and revenge, yet despised others,—neither are we all Christians who are called by the name of Christ, if we seek not to imitate the charity, and meekness, and holiness, and love that shone forth in the life of our Master and Redeemer

CHAPTER V.

It was on the sabbath-day that the intelligence of the fall of Jotapata, and the massacre of the garrison and inhabitants, reached Jerusalem; and the dreadful news brought grief and consternation into the city. Their chief warrior, on whom they depended as the leader of their armies, was reported to have fallen; their choicest troops were slain; and one of the strongest of the Galilean fortresses destroyed. But though the dejection and sorrow were general, yet in some families it was more profound and heartfelt, for they had lost a son, a brother, or a husband among the Jewish troops. In Zadok's house the sound of mourning and woe was heard, for it was believed that Javan was slain. He had joined the army of Josephus, and was known to be present at the siege of Jotapata; and as all the garrison as well as the inhabitants were reported to be massacred, his parents, his sister, and the faithful old Deborah wept and lamented for him as dead, with all the vehemence, and the deep demonstrations of grief, that were always exhibited by the ancient Jews, and still distinguish the inhabitants of the East in all cases of severe affliction. Javan's faults were now forgotten, and it was only remembered that he was a son and a brother; and even Claudia, who had never loved him, was filled with sorrow at the thought of his untimely and cruel death. Zadok sought in vain to console his weeping family; while his own heart was torn with grief for his lost son, and saddened at the unhappy prospects of his ill-fated country.

But while he was absorbed in gloomy thoughts, the trumpets of the temple sounded long and loud, and reminded him that it was the hour for the evening sacrifice, and that he must lay aside all worldly feelings, and go forth to minister in the Lord's house. It was his turn that day to officiate at the altar in the order of his course; and no private business or private sorrow must be allowed to interfere with his holy office. He therefore performed the necessary ablutions and purifications, and assumed his priestly robes. The trumpets sounded again, and he set forth towards the temple; and ere he had ascended the broad flight of steps that led to the outer court, the third and last summons pealed forth, and echoed from the hills around, to call the inhabitants and the throngs of priests and Levites to worship in that glorious house of God. The cheerfulness and peace which usually marked the weekly festival of the Jewish sabbath, had been interrupted and clouded that day by the news from Jotapata; and the crowds of rich and poor, old and young, master and slave, who had met without the gates to enjoy the day of rest, and indulge, according to their custom, in social intercourse, had hurried into the city to listen to the gloomy tidings. The dismay and sorrow that had stricken so many families prevented the temple service from being so numerously attended as usual, and delayed the arrival of the congregation; so that Zadok entered the outer court (or court of the Gentiles), and found the spacious area nearly deserted. His spirit was sad, and he walked slowly through the pillared cloisters that surrounded the court, and led to the stately dwellings of the priests and ministering officers of the temple. Beneath the alabaster porticoes and colonnades were the seats where the elders and sages passed much of their time in instructing the people, but they were now unoccupied. He passed on to the inner or holy temple, and looked with melancholy pride and admiration on the marble walls, the gold and

silver gates, the ornaments of clustering grapes, and pomegranates of glittering gold and brass, the cedar roofs, and splendid hangings of purple and scarlet, and the altars of rich incense that filled the air with the most exquisite perfumes, and his naturally sanguine spirit was depressed. Even he felt that the power of the Romans was becoming irresistible, and that ere long, flushed with their Galilean victories, they would appear before the walls of Jerusalem. With their divided and ill-governed troops, how could the Jews hope to resist their countless and well-disciplined forces? and should they once more gain access into the holy and beloved city, urged on by revenge and fury, where would their ravages cease? and what would be the fate of the sacred building in which he stood? Its beauty and its sanctity might fail to preserve it from the destroying hands of the idolaters, though every son of Israel were to shed his blood in its defence.

Zadok strove to shake off these dismal forebodings, so unusual to his heroic and exalted character; for, relying on the arm of Jehovah, and believing the Jews to be his only and peculiar people, he seldom admitted a thought that any serious calamity would be permitted to fall on them. He approached the altar of sacrifice, now surrounded by the gathering crowd, and took from the hands of the attending Levites the appointed victims, two being always prepared for the sabbath offering. He slew them, and presented them before the Lord with all the accustomed forms; and while the smoke of the altar ascended in a cloud of the richest incense, he looked forward in faith to that Messiah, of whom he knew these sacrifices were but the type, and whom he believed in his blindness had not yet appeared on the earth to take away sin, and redeem his people. But though Zadok was in error, yet his piety was sincere and fervent, and his soul was comforted by the sacred service and the holy worship;

so that he returned to his house with a more cheerful countenance.

But sorrow and dismay had taken possession of the city, and for thirty days the voice of wailing was heard in Jerusalem. Almost every family was called to mourn some private calamity, in the loss of their friends and relations who had fallen at Jotapata; while all united in deploring the death of Josephus as a heavy national affliction; and musicians were hired to perform funeral chants to his memory. The chiefs and elders met in frequent council, to devise what measures should be adopted for checking the further progress of the Romans: but their assemblies were generally broken up in wrath and violence, for among the contending parties who exercised power and tyranny in the unhappy city, none could be found to unite cordially for the general good; and nothing effectual was determined on. Zadok attended several of these councils, and endeavoured by his manly good sense and acute judgment, to lead the conflicting chiefs to lay aside their private quarrels, and join heart and hand for the common defence of their country; but his voice was unheeded, and jealousy and passion reigned supreme. So violent were some of the parties on one occasion, that at length he departed from the scene of tumult, and hastened to his home, where yet he could enjoy domestic peace and tranquillity.

Naomi met him as he entered the vestibule, and he was astonished at seeing her lovely face radiant with smiles of joy. She knelt before him with the graceful veneration which was always expected from the children of the ancient Israelites towards their parents when demanding their blessing, on their return from the temple, or on any other solemn occasion; and her father fondly laid his hands on her glossy and raven hair, and pronounced the customary benediction, "God make thee as Sarah, and Rebecca, and Rachel, and Leah;" thus using the words of the patriarch Jacob, but substituting

the names of those favoured women of Ephraim and Manasseh, as the blessing was addressed to a female Naomi then sprang up, and threw herself into the arms of her father, exclaiming, "Javan is alive! my brother is safe! Oh let us praise the Lord for his goodness!"

She was quickly followed by Salome, who with tears of joy and gratitude presented to Zadok a letter from their friend Rufus, and informed him that a special messenger had arrived with the letter immediately after his departure for the temple. It was accompanied by one to Claudia, which had declared its contents, and given them the happy intelligence of Javan's preservation and safety; but they had waited impatiently for Zadok's return, to satisfy their curiosity as to all the particulars of his fate. Their joy was greatly clouded when they found that he was a prisoner in the Roman camp, though Rufus assured them that he was kindly treated, and that there was a hope of his being released if the Jews submitted, and any exchange of prisoners took place. But Zadok knew that of such an event there was not the slightest probability, as the Jews were resolved to resist the Roman power to the very uttermost; and his own national pride and desire for the independence of his people were so great, that even to procure the freedom of his son, he could not bring himself to hope for their submission. He did not however communicate these reflections to his wife and daughter; and he joined with them in their joy and gratitude that Javan's life was spared.

Rufus had hoped that his messenger would have reached Jerusalem before the sad tidings of the fall of Jotapata were known there, and that thus his friends would be spared the shock of believing that their son had fallen in the general massacre; but it had required some trouble and ingenuity to convey his letters into the hands of a trustworthy Jew, who would undertake to deliver them to Zadok, as of course none of his own Roman troops could go on such an errand; and ere all this could be arranged,

the intelligence had flown to the capital. The packet contained also a letter from Marcellus to Claudia, which had been sent from Rome by a friend of his, who was ordered to join the camp with a reinforcement of troops, and Rufus had now forwarded it to his daughter. As we have heard but little of the proceedings of the young Roman, we will here give the substance of his letter:—

"It is a long time, my dearest Claudia, since I have found means of writing to you; and I now gladly avail myself of the departure of a body of soldiers to Galilee, one of whom is a valued friend of mine, and will safely convey my letter. When last I heard from you, you mentioned the probability of your going to our old friends at Jerusalem; and I rejoiced to think that you would again enjoy their society, and be in peace and safety under their happy roof. How few of their nation are so free from prejudice and superstition as to admit a Roman maiden into their house as a member of the family! Javan alone will make your residence there in any way irksome, for if he is not greatly changed, he will almost scorn to eat at the same table with a Gentile. But our dear Naomi and the kind gentle Salome will be to you as a sister and a mother, now that you are bereft of your own beloved parent; and Zadok is too generous and too high-minded to suffer you to be slighted while under his protection. Oh that I were with you, my sister! All the magnificence and gaiety of Rome do not compensate me for being so far removed from all whom I have loved from childhood; and I often think with regret of the happy hours I have passed with you and Naomi among the groves and gardens of Judea. I rejoice to say that my time of probation is almost over, and I shall soon be enrolled among the soldiers of Rome, and sent to join one of the legions now on duty abroad. Our uncle Sulpitius has much interest with the emperor, and he promises to

get me appointed to the tenth legion, which is commanded by the noble Titus, and is now in Galilee, forming part of the great army with which Vespasian hopes ere long to quell the Jewish rebellion. I shall then be with my father, and also shall hope to see you, and possibly Naomi also, for the war cannot last much longer. The Jews must soon submit to the overwhelming power of Rome; and I trust they will do so before much more blood is shed, and before Vespasian leads his troops against Jerusalem itself, which is said here to be his intention. What would be my feelings, if as a Roman soldier I was forced to assist in the capture of the place where our dear Naomi and all her family dwell, and to fight against her father, and her brother! You, my sister, would of course be removed to some safe refuge; but I know that Zadok would remain to counsel and aid his countrymen; and Naomi's devoted spirit would never allow her to seek safety in any other spot, while her father, her mother, and her beloved city, were exposed to danger. Oh! that her valiant and patriotic people may yet be wise in time, and by a prudent submission avert the fearful calamities which may otherwise overtake them! Their further resistance will only exasperate the emperor and his generals yet more and more, and bring a heavier ruin on their heads. My heart is in Jerusalem; and while I glory in being a Roman, I feel that Jerusalem is still my home, and the place where I would wish to dwell. This is a glorious and magnificent city, even surpassing all my expectations. You, I think, must have quite forgotten the city where you were born, for even I had but a faint recollection of some of the chief streets; and everything seemed strange to me when I returned, except my uncle's house and his extensive garden, where we used to play in our childhood with our cousin Camillus. Whenever I enter this lonely spot I feel at home again; and such recollections rush to my mind of my dear mother, that I can hardly believe she is departed, and

that I shall see her no more. May her spirit be blessed wherever it now dwells!

"You know that the house in which we lived in Rome has been destroyed, and a noble temple dedicated to Mercury now occupies the place where it stood. Doubtless you will suppose that thither I often bend my steps and pay my vows; but, Claudia, it is not so. I live in the capital of the gods of Rome; and wherever I turn I behold splendid fanes, and rich altars, and exquisite sculptures set up in honour of these countless deities; but I have ceased to bow my knee to any of them. Yet do not suppose, that like so many of my young countrymen, in discovering the fallacy and absurdity of the system in which I had been educated, I have cast off all belief, and become an infidel. No, I have learnt to worship the one true God of heaven and earth; and tell your friend Naomi that henceforth she must not think of Marcellus as a blind idolater, who bows down to images of wood and stone, but a sincere worshipper of Jehovah. And yet I do not declare myself a Jew, for many of the Jewish rites and ceremonies still seem to me but folly; and I have been instructed in many things that I would wish to communicate to you, but I dare not until we meet. Oh, Claudia, let a brother's entreaties and a brother's example induce you to embrace a better faith than that which now you hold. Listen to the words of Naomi, and she will tell you of the power, and wisdom, and love of our great Creator, who is far above all gods; and may He enlighten your mind to see in Him the true Deity, and lead you to despise those gods that are the work of men's hands, and have no power to do either good or evil.

"Through His mercy I became acquainted with an aged man, learned in the Scriptures and full of piety and holiness. His arguments have convinced me of the folly of idolatry, and the happiness of putting all our trust in the Almighty Jehovah. I beseech you to read those holy Scriptures with care and diligence, and by the blessing of

God you will learn the truth; and then when I see you, my sister, I will impart to you what further knowledge I have received from my venerable friend. He has many scholars here, but he is hated and despised by the Romans, as the doctrines that he teaches, and the mode of life that he inculcates and follows, are in direct opposition to the absurd faith and luxurious lives of the people of this great but wicked city. Nero especially holds in abhorrence both the Jews and those who attend the teaching of my instructor. All his time is devoted to amusement or to cruelty; and on the Nazarenes, who are numerous in Rome, he wreaks his vengeance with an unsparing hand, whenever they are discovered and dragged before him. You will shudder when I tell you of the dreadful treatment which some of these unhappy people have met with lately.

"A party of them were discovered and accused before the emperor of being followers of Jesus of Nazareth; and they boldly avowed the charge, and declared their resolution to endure all things that could be inflicted on them, but never to deny the name of Jesus. The indignation of Nero was excited at their undaunted reply, and he determined to employ the severest cruelty, in order to force them to submit to his commands, and to bow down to an idol. But nothing could shake their firmness, and they were given over to death in its most hideous forms. Some of them were enclosed in the skins of beasts, and turned into the Circus, and torn to pieces by dogs. Others were crucified; and to increase their torments, they were insulted and mocked in their dying agonies. And worse than all, when the public games were performed in the emperor's own gardens, and the populace were admitted to see them, some of these miserable Christians were covered with wax and other combustibles, and fixed in different parts of the gardens, with a sharp stake placed under their chin to keep them upright, and in that situation they were set on fire, and burnt alive to

serve as flambeaux to light the spectators! My blood boils while I describe these enormities, which doubtless will call down a judgment on those who perpetrated them, and on this guilty city; though many of the inhabitants were filled with pity and indignation at the sight of such sufferings, and would have endeavoured to obtain the pardon of the Nazarenes, had not the character of Nero and his violent and bloody temper deterred them from the attempt. Think not that I witnessed these executions. Camillus would have dragged me to the gardens, but I left him, and fled from the city in horror and disgust. I grieve to say that he witnessed and enjoyed the revolting spectacle; though his natural refinement of disposition would, I should have imagined, have deterred him, even if no feelings of humanity existed in his heart. Unhappily he is devoted to the worst species of philosophy; and disregards all religion and all care for the good of mankind, making his own individual enjoyment the sole object of his existence He believes that when he dies his spirit will be totally annihilated, and that therefore it is the highest wisdom to seize on every enjoyment now within his grasp, and think not of the future. He passes much of his time in the schools of the Epicurean philosophers, whose doctrines he finds agreeable, and many of whom are certainly men of great abilities, and capable of giving useful instruction on every subject unconnected with religion. On my first arrival in Rome, I frequented their schools with Camillus, and the charm of their eloquence almost beguiled me into adopting their opinions; but, happily for me, my acquaintance with the old teacher whom I have mentioned already, occurred in time to save me from such pernicious doctrines.

"I also accompanied our cousin to the amphitheatres and other public exhibitions; but they soon wearied me, and the barbarity of the combats of the gladiators, and the cruel struggles of condemned criminals with wild

beasts, shocked and disgusted me; and notwithstanding the ridicule of Camillus and his equally thoughtless companions, I have ceased to attend these spectacles. Indeed I usually seize the opportunity of my uncle and cousin being thus engaged, for repairing to the humble dwelling of my beloved teacher, where I listen to his words of truth and piety with untiring and increasing attention.

"In this luxurious city, the house of Sulpitius is remarkable for its simplicity and absence of all ornament. He prides himself on preserving the same frugality and modesty in his dwelling and establishment that so peculiarly distinguished the ancient Romans in the days of the Republic. He extends this simplicity to every part of his domestic life, and it is only when he takes his place as a senator that he assumes such robes as are suitable to his rank and wealth; on all other occasions his attire is plain, even to singularity, and forms a contrast to the splendid and expensive attire of Camillus, who is permitted to indulge all his tastes and fancies to the utmost, though so widely differing from those of his father. The increasing luxury and refinement of the Romans is a source of deep grief to Sulpitius: but he feels that it is in vain to attempt to check it, even in his own son; and with a few of his friends who still retain their virtue and simplicity of manners, he bewails the corruption of the times. The sumptuous golden palace of Nero excites his highest indignation, as an example of extravagance and lavish indulgence that will be pernicious to the whole nation. It is indeed a splendid edifice, and fitted up with gold and silver, and marble and precious stones, and Babylonian carpets, as if almost to vie with the temple at Jerusalem. But nothing has excited my admiration and wonder more than the aqueducts and the public roads, which I have seen in my excursions in the neighbourhood. The roads are carried in a direct line from the city, as a grand centre, to the towns

around, and I hear that they extend through great part of the Roman dominions. All obstacles are made to give way; hills are levelled, and valleys filled up, and bold arches thrown over streams and rivers. The middle of the road is raised to a considerable height, with a mixture of sand and gravel united into a solid mass with a powerful and durable cement, and this terrace is then paved with large hewn stones, so well laid together that I imagine they must last as long as the world endures. There are houses established at every five or six miles' distance, which are constantly supplied with forty horses for the use of travellers, and on any urgent occasion the messengers of the emperor travel along these roads at a rate of a hundred miles a-day. All this is a fine effect of Roman power and civilization, and so is the extensive and lucrative commerce that is carried on with every country in the known world; but I blush for the corrupt tastes of my countrymen, when I see silk dresses purchased with an equal weight of gold, and immense sums of money squandered in the Asiatic merchants' shops, for pearls, and jewels, and aromatics, and hangings, and carpets from Tyre and Babylon, and the distant cities of Persia. The strongest mark of the decline of Roman manners is, I think, the ostentatious display which every citizen now makes of a multitude of household slaves. In one palace that I have visited with my uncle, no less than four hundred are to be found; and the wealth of a Roman is estimated by the number of slaves that he possesses. That is a melancholy species of wealth which consists in the persons of our fellow-creatures! Camillus says that they were born to serve the Romans; but I cannot believe that the great and merciful Creator designed one race of men to be subject to the cruelty and caprice of another, or that victory in war can entitle the conquerors to treat the vanquished like beasts of burden. A sad procession of captive Jews arrived here a few days ago, sent by Vespasian from

one of the conquered cities of Galilee, and they were led to the public market and sold as slaves. Their manly and heroic countenances filled me with pity and with grief, and I was weak enough—as Camillus would have called it—to weep at the degradation of so many noble human beings; and particularly when I reflected that they were Naomi's fellow-countrymen, and that her own father and brother, yes, and even she herself, might one day be exposed to the same indignity and misery. Oh may the Lord avert so deep a calamity, and give the Jews a heart to see their danger and imprudence, and to retrace their steps, ere themselves and all most dear to them are plunged in ruin and in slavery! Farewell, my dear Claudia. Commend me with great affection and respect to Naomi, and greet her parents and her brother as my oldest friends. The blessing of heaven attend you all; and may God listen to the prayers that are daily offered up for you by your brother

"MARCELLUS."

This long letter from her beloved brother gave Claudia the greatest pleasure; and though she expressed much surprise at the entire change in his sentiments on religion, and the deep importance which he now seemed to attach to that subject, yet the change did not appear to give her any dissatisfaction, and from that time she listened with attention and complacency to all the arguments of Naomi, and even obeyed her brother's injunction to peruse the inspired writings of Moses and the prophets, of which her friend possessed a beautiful copy. The intelligence conveyed in the letter of Marcellus was to Naomi a source of unmixed joy and gratitude. That he who had so long possessed her esteem and affection should have forsaken the sin and folly of idolatry, and have learned to worship that one Supreme Being who was the object of her entire devotion, filled her with delight; and she felt that her attachment to him, against which she

had so long struggled, was now no longer guilty. But a great change had taken place in her own opinions and feelings since her first interview with Mary on the Mount of Olives. All that she had heard from that aged disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ had sunk deep into her heart, and God had caused the word of truth spoken by his feeble servant to take root in the soul of the young Jewess. She could not banish the subject from her thoughts; and the natural energy and determination of her character led her to risk everything, in order to obtain information on a point which she felt to be one of eternal consequence.

She had therefore used all her influence with the kind-hearted, indulgent old Deborah; and had already induced her to accompany her more than once to the house of her Christian friend, and to leave her there to enjoy, for as long a time as it was safe to do so, the conversation that was at once so interesting and so delightful. Deborah was not informed that Mary was one of the detested sect of the Nazarenes, or even Naomi would have failed to persuade her to assist in these stolen interviews; but she knew that her religion differed from that of her young friend, and therefore she believed that she was of a different sect of Jews to that of which Zadok and his family were distinguished members, and that consequently Naomi's friendship for her would be disapproved of by her father; but she thought no great harm could come from these meetings, and promised that she would keep them secret.

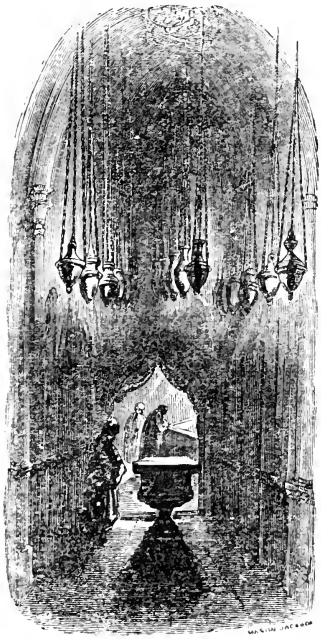
Nothing would ever have induced the open-hearted affectionate Naomi to conceal any of her actions from her parents, but the certainty that, in this case, their knowledge of her object, and the change that was rapidly being effected in her sentiments, would only cause them profound grief and excite their severe displeasure, without in any way banishing from her mind the ardent desire and resolution to become acquainted with the

doctrines of Christianity. She felt that her soul was at stake; and if all she heard from Mary was true, it was her duty even to forsake her father and mother, rather than deny and abandon that faith which was able to make her wise unto salvation. She could not conceal from herself that already she was almost persuaded to be a Christian; and the blessed hopes of life and immortality that were opened to her mind as the Gospel of Jesus Christ was gradually made known to her, brought with them a satisfaction and joy such as she had never felt before, and such as she would not have resigned for any earthly consideration.

"Would Marcellus ever believe in the crucified Jesus of Nazareth?" was a thought that crossed her mind with force, while she rejoiced in the declaration which she had just heard in his letter to Claudia, of his being no longer an idolater;—"otherwise should we not be still divided by our faith, even as we have ever been?"—and her first act on finding herself alone, was to implore that the same grace that had already partially dispelled the blindness and unbelief of her own heart, might be granted to Marcellus, and lead him to a like faith. "When we meet," said she to herself, "I will repeat to him all that Mary has told me;—never will one word of her discourse pass from my memory;—or, if possible, I will lead him to her dwelling, and he shall hear the words of truth and wonder from her own lips. He has proved that his soul is open to conviction, by so quickly receiving the belief in one Almighty God; and doubtless he will as candidly and freely listen to the story of Jesus of Nazareth, and then surely he will see, and believe, and adore, as I feel myself constrained to do."

Had Naomi known all that Marcellus had not ventured to declare in his letter, how happy and how thankful would she have been!—for he had already advanced beyond herself in religious light and knowledge, and was

a sincere, devoted, and enlightened Christian. The teacher to whom he owed his conversion was no other than Clement of Rome, the fellow-worker with St. Paul, and, who, after having laboured in the church at Philippi, had removed to the capital, where in after times he succeeded to the bishopric, and lived until the third year of the reign of the Emperor Trajan.



CHAPTER VI.

The letter of Rufus conveyed the intelligence of Josephus's preservation, and his captivity in the Roman camp, and Zadok hastened to communicate it to the chief men of the city. The news spread rapidly through Jerusalem, and as rapidly the sorrow that had been felt and shown on account of his supposed death was changed into the fiercest indignation at his thus consenting to survive his heroic countrymen. Some called him a dastardly coward, who had feared to meet an honourable death, while others execrated his name as a traitor; and a fierce desire to wreak their vengeance on the apostate was now added to the other motives for resistance to the Romans. They longed to see Vespasian's standards approach their walls, in the full conviction that no power would resist the fury of their sally on the foe, and that all their calamities and reverses would be obliterated in the blood of their enemies.

But Vespasian did not yet give them the opportunity which they so madly desired. What were his motives for not pursuing his victorious way to Jerusalem at that time is uncertain; but so it was, that he turned aside and left the rebels in the capital to exercise their fury on themselves, and thus to weaken their own powers. The Roman general visited Agrippa at Cæsarea, on the sea-coast, and then passed to Cæsarea Philippi in the north of Galilee, where he allowed his army to rest and refresh themselves for twenty days.

He then proceeded to quell the symptoms of insurrec-

tion which had been displayed in Tiberias and Tarichea, two cities on the Lake of Genesareth that belonged to King Agrippa, but seemed little disposed to unite with him in his attachment to the Roman party. Tiberias soon surrendered, but a body of insurgents left the city, and took refuge in Tarichea, which had been carefully fortified by Josephus. The Roman army pitched their camp beneath the walls, and commenced their preparations for a siege; and while their works were advancing, a reinforcement of young recruits arrived from Rome, and joined the legions already assembled. Among these recruits was Marcellus, who was received with the warmest affection by his father, and through his interest was soon enrolled among the troops under the special command of Titus. Before he was allowed to take his place among his future comrades, an oath was administered to him, according to the military custom of the Romans, with every circumstance of solemnity. He was required to swear that he would never desert his standard, that he would submit his own will to the commands of his leaders, and that he would sacrifice his life for the safety of the emperor or the empire. This ceremony being performed, his arms were presented to him, and he became one of the redoubted band of cavalry so nobly led by the gallant Titus. The arms of attack and defence of the cavalry consisted of a coat of mail, and light boots and helmet; an oblong shield was fastened on the left arm, while the right hand carried a long javelin, and a sharp broadsword hung from the girdle. The foot soldiers were very differently accoutred, having an open helmet with a lofty crest, a breastplate of iron, and greaves of the same metal on their legs. A shield or buckler, four feet long and two feet and a-half wide, was carried on the left arm, and was capable of covering the whole person, when the troops knelt to receive the charge of their enemies. It was composed of a frame of light wood, on which was stretched a bull's-hide, and

strengthened with plates of brass. Their offensive arms were powerful and various, consisting of a light spear for thrusting, and also *pilium*, or ponderous javelin, six feet long, and terminating in a steel point of the length of eighteen inches. This was thrown from a distance of ten or twelve yards; and such were its force and weight when cast by the practised hand of a veteran legionary, that neither shield nor corslet could resist it. After the pilium had been thrown, the soldier drew his short, double-edged sword, and rushed forward to the closer and yet more deadly conflict that was carried on hand to hand.

For a few days the operations of the besieging army continued undisturbed, and Marcellus was not called to prove his own courage and discipline, or the temper of his polished and unsullied arms. He therefore employed this brief period of leisure in rambling along the shores of the beautiful lake, as far as he could do so with safety. It was a lovely spot, and even to a common observer could not fail to be full of interest. The blue waters stretched before him, calm and transparent beneath the warm beams of an eastern sun, and the shores were crowded with rich and populous towns, whose terraced roofs and lofty towers were seen rising above the luxuriant groves and orchards that clothed the whole of that fertile district. The graceful palm, the dark olive, and the spreading fig-tree fringed the very margin of the lake, and were reflected on its smooth surface as on a mirror; while every port was animated with vessels preparing to assist the Taricheans in the defence of their city, or in case of a defeat to carry them off to the other side of the lake. A great part of the town was washed by the waters, and thus protected from the assault of the Romans, and a strong wall was carried round on every other side. Close to this wall the camp of Vespasian was pitched, and the white tents and glittering banners glanced gaily in the

sunshine. Marcellus wandered in the shade of a grove of palms, and looked with admiration and emotion on the scene before him; but it was not the natural beauty of the landscape which chiefly excited his feelings, nor was it the animating view of military preparations or the thoughts of military glory that now filled the heart of the young soldier. No, his soul was absorbed in thoughts of days gone by, and his imagination pictured to him the scenes that had once been witnessed on the shores of that now tranquil lake. His fancy once again peopled the grove in which he stood with a multitude of Galilean peasants and rude fishermen, with men, women, and children, all hushed in silence, and listening with deep attention to the words of one individual who stood in the midst of them, and on whom every eye was turned. No rays of visible glory shone round the head of the speaker—no heavenly light illuminated his features—his form was as that of other men; and yet, oh how different! There was a calm majesty in his person, and an expression of godlike mercy and compassion in his mild and dignified countenance, that separated him immeasurably from all the human beings that surrounded him. And from his lips proceeded such gracious, such piercing words of instruction, of reproof, of love, and of pity, that Marcellus awoke from his deep reverie, exclaiming, "Truly never man spoke like this man! O blessed Jesus! would that I had seen thy day on earth, and had lived a humble fisherman on these shores, that I might have heard thy voice, and followed thy steps, and ministered to thee and died with thee!"

So thought and so felt the ardent young convert; and so have thought and felt many a sincere Christian, while recalling to his mind the days when his Saviour walked upon the earth, and marvelling at the unbelief and hardness of heart, and faithless conduct of those who beheld his miracles and heard his instructions; yes, even of those chosen few who were privileged to

be his followers and his friends. But "let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Had we been brought up in the errors and prejudices of the Jews in those days, we too might have rejected and disbelieved the Messiah in his poverty and humility: and let us beware that with all the light of the Gospel, and all the advantages of a Christian education, we do not practically reject the Saviour, and in our lives deny him. Let us ask of him strength to cleave to him through all temptations and all trials, and faith to believe in him, though as yet we see not his face; remembering his own words of encouragement, "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed."

Marcellus lingered long in the shady grove. Before he left Rome he had been presented by his beloved teacher, Clement, with a small copy of the Gospel of St. Matthew; and this treasure he always carried about him, and eagerly sought every opportunity of studying it, when he could do so unobserved. He now drew it forth, and unrolled the long and narrow strip of parchment on which it was inscribed. It was written in Hebrew, but his long residence in Jerusalem, and his constant intercourse with the family of Zadok, had made him familiar with that language, and he read with interest and delight until the shades of evening warned him to return to his father's tent.

"Ah," thought he, "if Naomi and Claudia were but with me, here in the scene of the miracles and the preaching of Him whom now they despise, how would I read to them the words of his own mouth, and how would I endeavour to repeat to them all that I heard from my venerable friend at Rome, and to touch their hearts and convince their minds with the narratives, the arguments, and the entreaties that he employed to remove the thick cloud of ignorance and prejudice in which I was enveloped, and to bless me with the light of the Gospel of Christ! Naomi at least worships the one

Almighty and true God, though in error and in darkness; but my poor Claudia, she, alas! is yet in idolatry. May the Lord Jehovah give power and strength to the words of her friend, and bring her to the knowledge of Himself, and so prepare her to receive the truths of Christianity! And my father, too, shall he live and die in his idolatry? God forbid! Alas, alas, my dear kind mother is gone beyond the reach of human teaching. She is in that world where no doubts or uncertainties remain; and though she died in ignorance and unbelief, yet surely it was only because the truth was never revealed to her. Her heart was pious and humble; she sought for God, and found him not, because she was surrounded with the gross darkness of idolatry; and surely He who died for all hath wiped away her sins and redeemed her soul, although she knew Him not."

Marcellus had fondly loved his mother, and her death had been embittered to him by the reflection that she died a heathen; and now he sought to assuage his grief by dwelling on the mercy of his God and Saviour, and trusting that as so "little had been given to her, much would not be required." This is a hope which we have reason confidently to indulge; for we are taught that the mercy of the Lord is infinite towards those who act up to the light that is given to them, and thus "having no law, are a law unto themselves."

Full of such reflections, Marcellus entered the camp, and passed along the lines of tents that formed broad and straight streets, thickly peopled with soldiers and the numerous followers of the army. In his father's tent he found Javan, whom he had not seen since his arrival at Tarichea. Though they had lived so much together in the days of their childhood and early youth, the great dissimilarity in their dispositions had prevented them from forming any friendship; and Marcellus could not but recall the numerous instances of unkind and arbitrary conduct that had so warmly roused his indigna-

tion against Javan in former days, and produced sharp altercation between them. But now he met him as a prisoner, humbled, though unchanged, and his newly acquired Christian principles taught him to forgive his enemy, and to comfort him in his distress. And then he was the brother of Naomi, though most unworthy to be so nearly connected to one so amiable, and generous, and lovely; and therefore the young Roman met him with an open kindness of manner that somewhat surprised the crafty and suspicious Javan.

It was however his interest to conciliate Marcellus, and he received him with an appearance of cordiality, and entered with him and Rufus into a long and interesting conversation upon their friends in Jerusalem, and the prospects of the capital being soon subjected to a siege, unless the rulers consented to a submission. Captivity had not subdued the spirit of Javan, and all his fierceness broke forth at such a suggestion. Death in its worst form, would, he declared, be far preferable to such a degradation; but while he made the assertion, his hearers remembered how he and his general had so lately consented to purchase their lives at the expense of their liberties, and Rufus could not quite conceal the smile that curled his lip while he listened to such bold professions. Javan saw and understood the smile, and his heart was filled with rage; and he inwardly vowed to be revenged when once more at liberty, and in a situation to encounter his benefactor with arms in his hand.

Marcellus saw but little of him for some time after this meeting, for his time and attention were soon occupied by the active proceedings of the siege. A sudden and vigorous sally was made by the fugitive Tiberians who had taken refuge in the city, upon a point where the military works were rapidly advancing; they dispersed the workmen and destroyed their labours; and when the troops advanced in strong array against them,

they fled back and escaped without any loss of life. A large party of them took refuge in the vessels that lay in their port, being unable to reach the gate from whence they had come forth; and then they pushed off into the lake, and cast anchor in a regular line, within reach of the missiles of their enemies, and commenced a battle, which terminated without any decisive effect.

The next day Marcellus was summoned to go forth with six hundred of his comrades to disperse a large body of Galileans, who were assembled in a plain before the city. When Titus, who commanded this troop of horse, arrived within sight of the insurgents, he perceived that their numbers were so immense, that he thought it necessary to demand further succours, and sent a messenger to his father for that purpose; but before the reinforcement could reach him, he resolved to charge the enemy. He made a short and spirited address to his men, and exhorted them not to shrink from encountering the multitude before them, but to advance boldly and secure the victory before their fellow-soldiers arrived to share the glory. He then placed himself at their head and prepared to lead them on, when four hundred horse appeared on the field, sent by Vespasian to strengthen his forces. His men were rather disposed to be angry than to rejoice at this arrival, so eager were they to uphold their character for bravery by meeting the enemy unsupported. Titus led the attack, and at first met with a firm resistance; but the Jews could not stand against the long spears of the cavalry, and overpowered by the weight of the horses and the force of the charge, they fled in confusion towards the city. The cavalry endeavoured to cut off their retreat, and the havoc which they made among the fugitives was dreadful, though numbers of them escaped and rushed in at the gates.

The inhabitants saw that there was no hope of their

resisting the foe, and desirous of preserving their lives and property, they proposed a surrender of the town; but the Tiberians and other strangers steadily refused to comply with this desire. The dissension became loud and tumultuous, and Titus hearing the noise and confusion within the walls, cried out to his men to seize the opportunity of making a vigorous attack, while the attention of the besieged was distracted by civil discord. He leaped upon his horse, and dashing into the lake, entered the city where it was undefended by the strong wall that enclosed it on all other sides. Numbers of his troops followed him; and such was the consternation of the besieged at this sudden and unexpected entrance, that they remained as if stupified, and attempted no resistance. The insurgents and many others sought to save themselves by rushing to the lake, but they met the Romans pouring into the city, and were slain before they could regain the streets.

When Titus ascertained that the chiefs of the rebel party were slain, he commanded his soldiers to cease from carnage; but he sent to inform his father that numbers of the inhabitants had escaped in boats, and had pushed out to sea beyond the reach of the archers. Vespasian immediately had several vessels prepared, and embarked a detachment of troops to pursue the fugitives to the middle of the lake. The light boats of the poor Galileans could offer no resistance to the Roman vessels, and they could only row swiftly round them, and endeavour to annoy the legionaries by throwing stones and darts among them, which merely served to irritate their pursuers. The shores were lined with hostile troops; and if they attempted to take refuge in some creek or rocky inlet, they were met by fierce enemies, or followed by the Roman barks, and pierced by their long spears, as they stood above them on their lofty decks. Many of the boats were crushed by the larger vessels, and when the drowning crew rose above the water, they were

transfixed by the arrows and lances of their infuriated foes. The surface of the lake, that so lately sparkled in peaceful beauty, was broken with forms of death and struggles of agony; its blue waters were tinged with blood, and for several days a corrupt vapour rose over its whole extent, bearing fearful witness to the multitude of slaughtered human beings that were concealed beneath. The verdant shores were scattered over with disfigured and unburied corpses, swollen and decaying beneath the burning sun; and the Romans themselves loathed to look upon the dreadful work of their own hands. Marcellus was not yet inured to scenes of cruelty and blood; and his heart sickened when he beheld the smiling, and in his eyes sacred, shores of the Galilean sea thus polluted with the remains of such ruthless barbarity.

For the cruelty of this massacre Vespasian may not be charged; but a blot remains upon his name for one action which succeeded it, and never can it be effaced by his glory in after days. Numbers of strangers had been taken captive by the Romans at the conquest of Tarichea, and as they were looked upon as the most determined rebels, they were kept distinct from the other prisoners. A tribunal was erected in the city, and the general proceeded to pass judgment on these offenders against the majesty of Rome. Instigated by some of his officers, he resolved on putting all these unfortunate strangers to death, lest, having no homes, they should wander through the country exciting riot and rebellion. But he feared to execute his barbarous decree in the streets of Tarichea, nor did he choose to expose to the whole city his cruel violation of the promise that had been given to these unfortunate men when they surrendered. He therefore ordered them to retire from the city, but only by the way that led to Tiberias. Hitherto the word of the Romans had been looked upon as inviolable, and the wretched wanderers

proceeded forth by the route which was commanded them. But they found the road guarded and blockaded on every side, and they could not proceed beyond the suburbs. Vespasian himself pursued them into the Stadium, and there twelve hundred of the aged and helpless were slain in cold blood; and six thousand, who were considered most fit for work, were reserved to be sent to Nero, and to be employed in labouring at some of his wild schemes; while thirty thousand were sold as slaves, besides a number that were presented to Agrippa.

Doubtless multitudes of these unhappy creatures were ruffians and vagabonds, whose object was to excite war and commotion in order that they might escape the due punishment of their crimes; but no considerations of this nature can palliate the cruelty and falsehood of Vespasian.

Many of the Galilean towns laid down their arms and opened their gates to the Romans, dismayed at the fearful example that had been set before them; and only Gamala, Gischala, and Itabyrium, with a few smaller towns, continued to hold out a defiance. Gamala was even considered a stronger fortress than Jotapata; and proud of its situation, the inhabitants refused to submit to the conqueror. But after a long and terrible siege it fell, on the 23rd of September, A.D. 67, and every inhabitant was slain, except two sisters of Philip, Agrippa's general; and they contrived to hide themselves from the cruel visitors. We will not any longer dwell on the horrible scenes of carnage that took place. To escape the swords of the Romans, many hundreds of men threw their wives and children down the precipices, and then dashed after them to swift and certain destruction.

Itabyrium had fallen, and Gischala, Jamnia, and Azotus, alone remained in arms. Terrified by the fate of the neighbouring towns, the inhabitants would have

submitted, but a strong faction within the walls, headed by John the son of Levi (better known as John of Gischala), prevented them from capitulating; and Titus was sent against the city at the head of a thousand horse. He saw that he might easily take it by assault, but he was weary of bloodshed, and probably also was aware of the peaceful disposition of the inhabitants, and he offered them terms if they would surrender. The wily John prevented the people from approaching the walls, which were manned by his own party, and he himself replied to the message of Titus. He affected great moderation and perfect acquiescence to the proposed terms; but stated that the day being the sabbath, the Jews could not proceed to comply with them without violating their most sacred laws; and therefore he begged for a delay. Titus complied with this apparently reasonable request, and even withdrew his troops to the town of Cydoessa, at a little distance.

John perceived that his artifice had succeeded; and at midnight he stole out of the city with all his band of armed followers, and a multitude of others, with their families and property, who had resolved on flying to Jerusalem. But soon the strength of the women and children began to fail, and they could follow no longer. The men abandoned them, and proceeded rapidly, leaving those who should have been their first care to perish unheeded and alone. The hard-hearted John urged his men to greater speed; and the miserable women sat down with their little ones to die in darkness and despair, while they listened to the departing footsteps of their cruel husbands and fathers, as the sounds died away in the increasing distance.

Titus appeared at the gates of the city the following day, to claim the performance of the terms that had been agreed upon; and the inhabitants who remained within the walls gladly threw them open, and delivered themselves up with their families into the hands of the

conquerors. When he learned the treachery of John, he immediately sent a troop of horse to overtake him, but he had escaped beyond their reach, and they returned to Gischala, bringing with them three thousand women and children, and having slain six thousand of the weary fugitives who had slackened their pace, and were separated from their selfish leader and his robber band. The conduct of Titus was marked with clemency and moderation towards the captured city: he merely threw down a portion of the wall, and left a garrison in the place to keep possession. Shortly after the surrender of Gischala, Jamnia and Azotus also followed its example, and received Roman garrisons; when the season being advanced, Vespasian closed the campaign, and retired to Cæsarea with his army.

CHAPTER VII.

The subjugation of Galilee had hitherto employed the whole of Vespasian's army; and such had been the courage and obstinacy displayed by the Jews, that it had cost the Romans much labour and pains to subdue the rebellious province. The leaders of the nation in Jerusalem had sent no forces to assist their Galilean brethren, nor had they used any other means for the relief of the besieged places. All their time and all their strength were wasted in violent civil dissensions, and furious struggles for power and authority in the metropolis. Perhaps also they hoped that the patience of the Romans would be exhausted, by the long continuance of the war in Galilee, and by the time and labour that were required to reduce one rebellious town after another; and that they would at length depart, and leave Jerusalem to its assumed independence. But far better would it have been if they had employed the time that was allowed them in preparing for the part which they ultimately had to perform; and if instead of admitting John of Gischala and his unprincipled followers into the city, they had sought to compose the dissensions that already existed, and to unite under one chief, for the general protection and safety.

But the fame of John had reached their ears, and the fact that he had been the rival and the enemy of the now despised Josephus, only raised him in the estimation of the people. As soon as it was known that he was approaching the city, multitudes flocked out to meet and

welcome him. The exhausted and breathless condition of the men and their horses too plainly told that they had travelled far and fast; but the deceitful John assured the inquiring populace that they had not fled from necessity or fear, but that they were unwilling to spend their strength and courage in the cause of meaner towns, and had come to shed their blood in the defence of the capital. This reply, however, did not satisfy all who heard it; and, from the evident confusion and discomfiture of the fugitives, and the dreadful details of massacre and ruin which they received from some of the men, they felt convinced that they had fled to save their lives from the Roman vengeance, and foreboded the fate that probably awaited themselves. John was a man of subtle and insinuating manner, and he employed his eloquence and his artifice successfully in persuading the people of Jerusalem that the Roman power was already so broken, and their troops so wearied and dispirited, that they would never venture to enter on the siege of such a formidable place as their beloved city.

The young and daring listened and applauded with loud shouts of approbation, but the old men doubted and feared for the future. The party of John was increased by numbers of fresh adherents, and the city became more than ever the scene of discord and violence. One faction was for war, another for peace; and the conflicting opinions distracted the public councils, and divided even private families into fierce and opposing parties. Every individual who had power or wealth sufficient, gathered around himself a band of adherents; and these lawless companies overspread the neighbouring country, insulting, robbing, and murdering the unoffending peasantry, who refused to join them in their crimes and violence. Multitudes of the inhabitants of the villages, believing that they could have nothing worse to fear from the Romans than what they suffered from their own countrymen, fled to the garrison towns; but the Romans either

rejoiced in the civil discord and mutual destruction, or considered that they had no concern in their quarrels, and they afforded the sufferers but little protection.

At length a powerful and numerous body of these marauders contrived to get into Jerusalem, and establish themselves permanently in the Holy City. They were not expelled or opposed; for the warlike party hoped by the accession of these bold and daring men, to gain strength for the defence of the metropolis. But they only added to the misery and tumult that already reigned within the walls; and with the multitude of persons who flocked from the neighbouring towns and villages, to take refuge in Jerusalem, they greatly hastened the consumption of provisions, which ought to have been reserved for a time of need, and famine began to be felt among other evils and woes.

The wise and excellent Zadok, with a few of his friends who were not actuated by avarice, ambition, or revenge, strove to stem the torrent of sedition and violence, and preserve order and decorum among the populace. But what could the efforts of a few individuals, however well-directed, effect against the influence of bribery, and passion, and intemperance, and licensed crime? Beyond their own families and immediate dependents, their counsels and warnings were unheeded and despised; and robberies, burglaries, and assassinations took place in the open day in the streets of Jerusalem. The robbers seized on Antipas, a man of royal blood, who had the charge of the public treasures, and cast him into prison. The next victims were Saphias and Levias, two members of the Herodian family, and many others of noble rank shared the same fate.

The people saw and feared; but so long as they were themselves unmolested, they took no measures to stay the growing evils. Emboldened by their present impunity, the ruffians proceeded to greater atrocities, and unwilling either to release their prisoners, or to keep them any

onger captive, they sent ten of their party with drawn swords into the prison, who speedily massacred the unfortunate captives. At length they dared to invade the sacred temple, and insult the majesty of Heaven with their impieties: the very holy of holies was entered and polluted by the feet of the murderers; and then the indignation of the populace broke forth. Ananus, the eldest of the chief priests, was the acknowledged leader of the party opposed to the robbers. He was a man of wisdom and moderation, but he now incited the people to resistance; and the band of Zealots fled to the temple, which they made their head-quarters, and turned into a garrison. That holy and beautiful house of God, the object of the fondest veneration and pride to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, was now the scene of warlike preparation and boisterous intemperance; and instead of hymns of prayer and praise, and the harmony of musical instruments, its marble and gilded walls re-echoed with the shouts and songs of the drunkards, or the clash of arms.

The Zealots even presumed to elect a high-priest by lot, and proclaimed the deposition of Matthias, who had a rightful claim to that dignity. The people rose unanimously at this sacrilegious act; and even those of the priests who had hitherto sought to preserve peace, now exhorted them to throw off the yoke of the Zealots. Zadok joined with Ananus and Joseph, and others, and both in public and private harangued the infuriated populace.

An assembly was convened, and Ananus, in a long and eloquent speech, pointed out to his hearers the state of degradation to which they had allowed themselves to be reduced, far more disgraceful than if they had submitted to the power of the Romans; and as he spoke, he turned his tearful eyes towards the violated temple, and reproached the people with abandoning it into the hands of robbers. He was listened to with deep attention, and at the close of his harangue the crowd around him demanded

to be led instantly to the rescue of the temple. The spies of the Zealot party who were among the multitude, gave them instant intelligence of the feeling which was excited against them, and while Ananus and Zadok were ordering their forces, a band of these robbers fell upon them. The battle raged with fury; numbers were slain on both sides, and their bodies carried off. Those of the Zealots who fell were borne back to the temple, and the polished marble pavement was stained and polluted with their blood. The populace pressed on, and drove the Zealots back into the temple, following them within the sacred walls with furious cries. The robbers passed the outer court, and secured the gates of the next enclosure against their pursuers; and Ananus would not allow his followers to press their advantage, and assault the gates, for he feared to commit violence in so holy a spot, or to take his people into that court which was yet polluted with slaughter and crime. He therefore retired, leaving six thousand men in the cloisters, to keep guard and watch the motions of the robbers.

The subtle John of Gischala had hitherto professed to support the cause of Ananus, but all the while he maintained a correspondence with the adverse party; and to prevent his double dealing from being suspected, he made such vehement protestations of fidelity to Ananus, and so readily took an oath of obedience and devotion, that the priests and their party were entirely deceived, and admitted him into their most secret councils, and even deputed him to go to the temple, and endeavour to bring their enemies to terms.

The traitor undertook the mission; but no sooner was he within the temple walls, than he threw off the mask, and addressed the robber crew as if he had taken an oath to support them, and not to oppose them. He told them that he had incurred serious dangers in the endeavour to befriend them; that schemes were now being concerted for delivering the city up to the Romans; and that their

destruction was inevitable, as Ananus had resolved to get into the temple, either under the pretence of performing worship, or else by main force; and he warned them that if they did not obtain some succour speedily, they would be at the mercy of the enraged populace. The leaders of the Zealots were Eleazer, the old enemy of Ananus, and Zacharias, the son of Phalea. They readily believed that vengeance would be taken on them by the opposing party; and instantly adopting the crafty suggestions of John, they despatched swift messengers to the Idumeans, to demand their assistance.

These fierce and uncivilized people were incorporated with the Jews as one nation; but they retained the love of adventure which belonged to their Arab blood, and the application of the Zealots was received with wild cries of joy. They hastily assembled, and formed themselves into a regular army of twenty thousand men, under the command of James and John the sons of Lofas, Simon the son of Cathlas, and Phineas the son of Clusothas. This numerous and powerful body advanced immediately towards Jerusalem, proclaiming that they were marching to the relief of the capital.

Suddenly they appeared beneath the walls and demanded admittance. The gates were closed, and Jesus, one of the chief priests, was deputed by Ananus to expostulate with them. He proposed to them either to join with the inhabitants in punishing those who caused the present tumult, or to enter without arms and mediate between the contending parties; or else to depart again to their own homes, and leave Jerusalem to finish its own internal war. All these propositions were rudely refused by the Idumeans; and Simon the son of Cathlas, replied, that they came to protect the patriotic party against those who wished to sell them to the Romans, and they were resolved to accomplish this design. His words were received with loud shouts by the Idumeans, and Jesus returned to Ananus, discouraged and apprehensive.

Simon encamped before the gates, and thus the party of Ananus found themselves besieged by two separate forces. The Zealots could not communicate with their new allies, for they were closely shut up in the temple; and the Idumeans could gain no access to them. Their camp was inconvenient, and in an exposed situation; and many of them repented of their hasty march, for as night drew on a fearful tempest gathered over the city, and broke with such violence as to strike terror into all who heard it; and every heart trembled in the conviction that it was a dreadful omen of coming destruction and woe. The rain fell in torrents, and was accompanied by terrific thunder and lightning, while the earth shook with the frequent vibrations of an earthquake. The Idumeans were exposed to the violence of the storm, with but little shelter, except their own broad shields, which they locked together over their heads, and thus obtained some protection from the heavy rain; while the Zealots looked forth from their elevated situation in the temple, anxious for the fate of their new allies, and eagerly sought some opportunity of rendering them assistance. Some of the most daring among them proposed to sally forth amid the darkness and tumult of the storm, force their way to the gates, and open them to admit their friends; trusting by the suddenness and fury of their assault, to overpower and scatter the guards who were placed in the outer court. But the more prudent objected strongly to this desperate measure, as they knew that the guards were more numerous than their own party, and also that the city walls and gates were closely watched, to prevent a surprise from the Idumeans. It was likewise the nightly custom of Ananus to pass up and down continually, and see that the sentinels were all at their posts, and he was now expected every moment.

On this one dreadful night, this necessary precaution was omitted. Perhaps Ananus trusted to the strength of the guard, which had been doubled since the arrival

of the Idumeans; or perhaps from the violence of the tempest, he felt assured that no attack would be attempted at that time. Whatever were his motives, assuredly they were overruled by an all-directing Providence, and made instrumental in bringing about the destruction and massacre which were permitted that night for the chastisement of a rebellious people. The darkness was profound; the storm raged fearfully; and many of the guard stole away for rest and shelter. This negligence was discovered by the watchful Zealots; and seizing on the sacred instruments of the temple, they proceeded to wrench off the hinges of one of the gates, and thus to open to themselves a way into the streets. The whistling and roaring of the wind, and the loud claps of thunder, drowned the noise of their operations, and a strong party of them reached the walls of the city undiscovered. They immediately applied their saws and crowbars to the gate, near which the Idumeans were encamped, and quickly tore it open.

The Idumeans at first suspected that this was some artifice of Ananus, to draw them on to destruction and they retreated in terror; but soon the Zealots approached, and reassured them, offering to conduct them to victory and revenge; and had they instantly made an attack on the city, nothing could have prevented a fearful and general slaughter. But their guides persuaded them first to hasten to the temple, and rescue the remainder of their party ere the guard should be aroused; for if those who watched the gates were once secured, and the whole band of Zealots released, they were assured that the conquest of the city would soon be accomplished amid the darkness and confusion of night.

Meanwhile the Zealots in the temple were anxiously awaiting the result of their enterprise; and when they found that the Idumeans were entering the sacred enclosure, they boldly came forth and joined them, and then altogether falling on the guard, many of whom were

buried in a profound sleep, they commenced a fearful slaughter. The guard at first gathered themselves together, and made head against their assailants; but when they found that the Idumeans were among their foes, they were convinced that the city was betrayed, and the greater part of them threw down their arms in a sudden panic. A few of the youngest and most courageous still maintained the conflict, and supported the attack of the Idumeans, while some of the older men escaped, and fled shrieking down the streets, awaking and alarming the slumbering inhabitants with an announcement of the dreadful calamity. They were answered by the screams and cries of women and children, sounding shrilly through the storm; while the wild shouts of the Idumeans and the Zealots came fearfully from the heights of Mount Moriah, and murky clouds gave forth their awful flashes and pealing thunders. No mercy was shown by the Idumeans to any of the guard who fell into their hands. In vain they appealed to the sanctity of the holy temple for protection; even its most sacred precincts were deluged with blood; and in despair many of the terrified men threw themselves headlong from the lofty rock on which the temple stood, and were dashed to pieces in the deep abyss below.

The whole of the outer court was strewed with the dead and dying; and when daylight broke on this awful scene of carnage, eight thousand five hundred bodies were found heaped on this one spot.

But the pure light of day did not put an end to the deeds of darkness and of blood that disgraced it. The ruffian band broke into the city, slaying and pillaging on every side. Ananus—the wise, the patriotic Ananus, on whom rested the hopes of all the rational and well-disposed inhabitants—and Jesus the son of Gamala, were seized and put to death, and their bodies trampled under the feet of their murderers, who reproached them with being traitors to the nation. To such a height did they

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carry their barbarity, as to cast forth the mangled remains of these priestly men to be devoured by dogs and birds of prey, in defiance of the superstitious veneration which had ever been entertained by the Jews towards the bodies of the dead. Had Ananus lived, doubtless the affairs of Jerusalem might have terminated more favourably; but her time was come, and it pleased God to remove all obstacles to the fulfilment of his righteous decree. With the venerable Ananus expired all hopes of peace with the Romans, and all prospect of tranquillity in the city; and the Jewish historian dates the utter ruin of Jerusalem from the death of this deeply-regretted man.

Having exercised their cruelty on these distinguished persons, the Idumeans raged with uncontrollable fury among the rest of the inhabitants, and slew multitudes of the meaner sort like so many wild beasts; but the young men and the nobles they cast into prison, in the hope that they might be induced to join their party. Not one complied with their wishes, and though scourged and tortured they yet resolutely endured, until their tormentors put an end to their sufferings by death.

During the bloody scenes of this terrific night, of which we have given but a faint sketch, the family of Zadok were agitated by the deepest anxiety. A few days previous to the arrival of the Idumeans, Naomi had left the city with her uncle Amaziah, and his wife Judith, to reside for a short time with them in a beautiful country-house which they possessed near the village of Bethany. Her return was expected on that fatal day, when a host of barbarous enemies so suddenly and unexpectedly appeared before the walls of Jerusalem. The gates were immediately closed and strictly guarded, and orders were issued that no person should, on any pretence, be allowed either to pass in or out of the city. Zadok was hastily summoned to assist the council of Ananus; and in trembling, anxiety did Salome, and

Claudia, and the aged Deborah, remain seated on the housetop, looking out over the dense multitude of Idumeans beneath the walls, and straining their eyes in the direction in which they expected Naomi and her friends to approach. What might be their fate if they came within sight of the barbarous invaders?—and from the hollow situation in which the Idumeans were encamped, they could not be perceived by those descending the Mount of Olives, until they might be so near them as to render escape impossible.

In this emergency, what course could be pursued, and how would it be practicable to send intelligence to Amaziah of the alarming state of the city! Salome at length resolved to go herself to Ananus, and entreat his aid and counsel. The present state of suspense was not to be borne, and any danger was preferable to the chance of her lovely and beloved daughter falling into the hands of the barbarians. The dreadful thought inspired even the timid Salome with courage; and covering herself with a thick veil, she descended from the flat roof of her dwelling, and went forth into the crowded and tumultuous streets, followed by several armed servants, and accompanied by the faithful Deborah, who could not be persuaded to remain behind.

The way by which Salome had to pass to the house of Ananus was thronged with men, many of them armed, and all in a state of great excitement. The adverse parties which tore the city with their dissensions were not united by the common danger that now threatened them, and loud and angry were the voices that fell on the ears of the trembling Salome as she hastily pursued her way through the crowd, and expected every moment to be assailed by the rude hands of robbery and violence. Happily the minds of all men were so much occupied with the dangers that then menaced the city, that Salome and her little group of attendants passed unnoticed, and reached the lofty portico in front of the

dwelling of Ananus in safety. The marble steps were crowded with priests and elders, and the chief men of the city, who were hurrying to and fro, to execute the orders of Ananus, or to join in the deliberations that were going forward in the council-chamber. Salome was at first unheeded, and sought in vain to obtain admittance to the chief-priest; but at length she raised her veil to look around among the throng for some one with whom she was acquainted, and who would conduct her to Ananus. The first countenance that met her gaze was that of Zadok, who started with surprise and alarm at beholding his gentle and timid wife so far from her home, and exposed to the tumult and disorder of the excited populace.

He hastily approached her, and inquired what could have led her forth at such a time. And when Salome felt that she was leaning on the arm of her intrepid and high-minded husband her confidence returned, and she quickly told him the object that had brought her thither, and had made her almost forget her own danger in anxiety for the safety of Naomi. In the hurry and occupation of the last few hours, it had not occurred to Zadok that his daughter had appointed that day for her return to the city, and thus might be exposed to the peril of falling into the power of the Idumeans. But now his whole soul was filled with apprehension on her account; and, accompanied by Salome, he hastily entered the council-chamber, and entreated that he might be permitted to go out of the city by one of the gates the furthest removed from the Idumean camp, and endeavour to make his way by secret paths to the house of Amaziah, in the hope that he might be in time to warn him of the danger of approaching the city.

Ananus hesitated; he was most unwilling to be deprived of the council and the assistance of Zadok at a period of so much danger and anxiety; and he also dreaded his falling into the hands of the enemy, who

would show no mercy to one who was well known to be his friend and adviser. But the perilous situation of Naomi and her relations moved him, and he demanded whether no other person of courage and fidelity could be found who would go on the errand, and who could be better spared than Zadok, in case it should be found impossible to return into the city. The mission was a dangerous one, and who could be found ready to undertake it? Zadok again requested that he might himself go forth, and promised at all risks to attempt a speedy return. At that moment Theophilus, the son of Amaziah, entered the apartment, and begged permission instantly to depart from the city and seek his father. He had been to the house of Zadok, and there Claudia had informed him of Salome's fears, and her errand to Ananus, and he had hurried after her to offer himself as the messenger.

Ananus gave his consent, and Salome saw the brave youth depart, with a feeling of joy that her husband was not exposed to the perils of the enterprise. Zadok then himself conducted her home, and immediately returned to the council; while his wife and Claudia again took their station among the flowering shrubs with which the roof was thickly planted, and from whence, unobserved by the crowds beneath them, they could perceive the movements of the multitudes both within and without the walls, and watch for the distant figure of Theophilus when he should pass over the highest part of the road to Bethany.

The day closed in, and darkness covered the scene with even greater suddenness than usual, for thick clouds had gathered over the sky, and the sun went down into a red and lurid horizon. Soon the rain fell heavily, and Salome and her young companion were forced to leave the housetop and take refuge in their apartment, where they passed the whole of that tremendous night in fear and watchfulness, listening to the warring elements

without, and trembling when, amid the fury of the tempest, they heard the savage shouts of the Idumeans and the nearer cries of the fugitives from the temple.

Zadok had not returned to his home that night; at the close of the evening he had sent a messenger to inform his wife that the deliberations were still continued, but that before midnight he purposed going the rounds of the guard with Ananus, and would afterwards hasten back to his family. Midnight came, but then the storm raged furiously, and Salome hoped that Zadok was safe in the house of Ananus. As the hours passed slowly on, the terrors of that night increased, and Salome knew from the tumult and the shouts, that some fierce commotion was going on in the city. Her fears were strongly excited for Zadok, who being with Ananus, and well known to be a powerful supporter of his party, would be exposed to the vengeance of the Zealots, if they had broken forth from the temple.

Fervently did she implore the Divine protection to shield him from harm, while Claudia and Deborah joined their prayers to hers; and amid all their fears and anxiety, they could not but rejoice that Naomi at least was removed from this scene of terror, and, as they hoped, yet enjoying a temporary peace in her uncle's house.

When the day began to dawn, they looked forth into the street, and though their dwelling was near the walls, and situated at a considerable distance from the principal thoroughfares, where the work of carnage had been chiefly performed, yet numbers of human bodies were scattered on the ground—the mangled remains of those who had fled to this secluded part of the city for refuge, but had been pursued and murdered by their savage enemies. No living beings were to be seen in the desolate street, except a few lean and hungry dogs which had crept out to tear and devour the yet warm carcases that promised them an ample meal; but the din of war

and cries of agony and fear resounded from the temple and the higher parts of the city. Salome's heart sickened, and she turned away: might not her noble, her beloved husband, be already as one of these lifeless corpses? In agony of mind she wept, and poured out her soul before the Lord.

Her attention was recalled by a loud exclamation of joy from Claudia. "Oh, Salome," she cried, "here is Theophilus. He is approaching the house, and doubtless he brings tidings of our dear Naomi." The affectionate girl ran swiftly down to the court; and unbarring the heavy gate that opened into the street, she even ventured several paces beyond the threshhold in her eagerness to know the fate of her friend. Theophilus assured her that Naomi was safe; and then having carefully secured the gate, he followed her to the vestibule, where Salome met them, and there hastily told them the particulars of his expedition. He had narrowly escaped being taken by some scattered parties of the Idumeans, and had only saved himself by his swiftness in running, and his intimate knowledge of the paths through the groves and orchards by which he had to pass. He had happily succeeded in eluding his pursuers, but only just in time to prevent the cavalcade of Amaziah and his family from ascending the hill on the eastern side, and appearing in full view of the Idumean sentinels. His father had received no intelligence of the arrival of their army, and was returning with Judith and Naomi to the city, as he had appointed. On hearing the disastrous news, however, he immediately turned back, and hastened again to the house from which he had come. There he placed his wife and Naomi, in as great security as the circumstances would permit, and left all his servants well armed under the direction of his faithful steward Josiah, to protect them from any wandering bands of robbers, or Idumeans. Amaziah had then accompanied Theophilus back to the city, and in the

darkness and tumult of the storm, which had become violent by the time they reached the walls, they had escaped the observation of the Idumeans, and passed safely to their own house. There they had remained until the shouts of the Zealots and their allies had aroused them to a knowledge of the distracted state of Jerusalem, and called them from the shelter of their home, to mingle in the tumult, and give their aid in opposing the massacres and pillage that were going forward.

Their efforts to reach Ananus had been in vain, for they found his dwelling entirely surrounded by a dense crowd of infuriated Zealots, crying loudly for his blood; and Amaziah had therefore again retired to his home, with a few of his friends, to seek some means of succouring the chief-priest and restoring order to the city; "While I," continued Theophilus, "have hastened to you, Salome, to satisfy your mind of the safety of your daughter, and to inquire whether my uncle is with you, for my father earnestly desires to confer with him."

"Alas!" cried Salome, "Zadok has not appeared at home during the whole of this dreadful night. He was with Ananus when the storm commenced, and I have remained in the agony of suspense ever since. I know not whether he yet lives, or whether the ruffians who now rage through the city have destroyed the noblest, the wisest, the most virtuous man who dwelt within its walls. Oh, Theophilus! he is your father's only brother! —will you not endeavour to save him? or will you not at least seek for some intelligence of his fate, and let me know the worst? If he is slain—oh!—save his sacred form from the insults of the murderers. Bear it to me, and let me once more behold, though lifeless, that countenance which is dearer to me than all on earth beside. Take with you all the men of our household; we have many faithful servants, and they are well provided with arms. They will risk their lives to save their master,

or to rescue his honoured remains from the sacrilegious hands of the Zealots. Go, summon the domestics, and sally forth Lose not a moment, and the blessing of a breaking heart shall be with you."

Theophilus was deeply moved by the grief of Salome, and the danger of his uncle. He had seen the house of Ananus beset by the Zealots, and he knew that Zadok would find no mercy from them. He did not however add to the fears of Salome by expressing his own; but hastily complied with her entreaties, and set out, attended by all the servants except two or three, whom he charged to guard the gate, and on no account to open it until his return.

His absence was long. To Salome it appeared endless; and more than once she and Claudia ventured to the house-top and looked along the street, in the hope of seeing him return. Once the sound of coming footsteps made her heart beat violently, and she gazed out in hope and in fear; but it was only a party of wretched women and children flying down the street, and soon appeared their pursuers, with drawn swords reeking with blood, and gained rapidly on the miserable fugitives. Salome and Claudia retreated with a cry of horror. They saw not the massacre, but the shrieks that rose upon their ears told them but too plainly that the work of death was done. The ruffians turned towards their dwelling, and they heard them loudly demanding an entrance, and even striking at the gate with their swords. But it was too strong for their efforts, and they were already almost satiated with plunder and carnage. They retreated, and the trembling inmates heard them pass along the street, which echoed with their wild shouts and impious songs.

All Salome's resolutions and endurance were exhausted. Her naturally timid spirit had been roused to unusual excitement and energy; but these feelings had subsided, and she sank into a state of exhaustion, and

almost of stupor. Had Zadok been by her side, she would have felt some confidence, but his absence and her apprehensions for his safety were more than she could bear. Even if Naomi had been with her she would have been some support. Her sanguine temper and courageous spirit would have suggested fresh hope and inspired fresh confidence; but Claudia was unable to administer comfort which she did not feel, or to combat terrors that filled her own breast also.

Meanwhile Theophilus and his band of armed servants hurried along the streets towards the house of Ananus. Every dwelling which they passed appeared to be deserted; for where the inhabitants had not either been slain, or fled to some cave or hiding-place for refuge, they had carefully closed and barricadoed every gate and entrance to their houses, and remained concealed within, expecting the arrival of the Zealots and Idumeans, to rob, to murder, and to destroy. The pavements were strewed with human bodies, and stained with gore: it seemed a "city of the dead;" but the peacefulness of death was not there—the tumult had not ceased. The murderers had only gone further in quest of other victims, and richer plunder; and the sounds of conflict and slaughter were audible in the distance.

Theophilus reached the splendid dwelling of Ananus. The crowd had abandoned it; and the open gates and scattered wreck of costly furniture told that the work of destruction was completed, and that the venerable priest no longer dwelt in his marble halls. It was evident that a severe contest had been maintained on the grand flight of steps leading to the entrance; for there the dead bodies of the combatants lay heaped together; and beneath the dreadful burden Theophilus beheld the robe of Zadok. It was a garment of fringes, the work of Naomi's hands, and he well remembered to have seen his uncle attired in it when he met him the previous

evening in the council-chamber. His worst fears were then realized; and the noble Zadok had fallen, probably in the defence of his friend and chieftain; and all that he could now do for the wretched Salome, would be to carry home the lifeless body of her husband, and thus afford her the melancholy satisfaction of bedewing it with her tears, and rendering to the honoured clay the holy rites of sepulture, so sacred to the heart of a Jew. No sooner did the servants perceive the body of their master, than they broke forth into loud cries of grief and rage, and demanded vengeance with all the vehemence of their national character; but Theophilus commanded them to be silent, and to lose no time in disengaging the corpse from its present situation, and bearing it away; for he feared that their outcries might attract the attention of the Idumeans, who were prowling all over the city, and that their object might then be frustrated. Hastily the men obeyed him; and having removed the mangled carcases that lay heavily above the body of Zadok, they raised it from the ground, and carried it into the vestibule, that they might procure a couch on which to transport it home.

They were startled on entering by a rustling sound, as of some person escaping from the vestibule; and on following the steps of the fugitive, they overtook one of the domestics of Ananus, who had escaped the notice of the murderers, and was anxiously watching for an opportunity to flee from the palace unobserved, when he saw a party of armed men enter the house, and concluded that they belonged to the Zealot party. The sight of Theophilus, who was well known to him, restored his courage; and he immediately directed his attendants where to procure a couch, on which the body was immediately laid, and a richly embroidered curtain, which had been dropped by the plunderers, was thrown over it. The servants placed their long spears beneath the couch, and in this manner carried it forth into the street.

and proceeded with the greatest possible expedition towards their home. They were within a few paces of the gate, when a party of drunken Idumeans sallied out of a neighbouring house loaded with spoil, and placing themselves before the melancholy cavalcade, demanded what they were thus secretly carrying away? On being informed that it was merely the body of a friend, they tauntingly replied, that dead bodies were now too plentiful to be worth so much trouble, and insisted on uncovering the corpse. To avoid a struggle, Theophilus raised the lower end of the covering, and when the ruffians saw that it was really a human body, they uttered a shout of derision, and one of them wantonly cast a javelin at the corpse, which pierced the arm, and the blood flowed profusely over the damask curtain. The Idumeans knew not the rank of Theophilus, nor were they aware that it was the body of Zadok, the friend of Ananus, that was being carried to its rest, otherwise they would probably have attempted to wrest it from the attendants; but satisfied with insulting it, they went on their way to seek more profitable adventures.

At the voice of Theophilus, the servants left on guard unclosed the massy gates, and uttered a cry of despair when they beheld the bier. The cry reached Salome's ears, and roused her to animation. She rose to rush forward and ascertain the cause, but her trembling limbs refused to support her, and she sank again into her seat, with a feeble sign to Claudia to hasten to the court. Claudia flew along the gallery, and met the procession at the entrance of the hall. The whole sad truth rushed upon her mind, and in deep grief she returned to her afflicted friend. Pale and speechless she appeared before Salome, and when she met her inquiring gaze, she replied only by a burst of tears Salome saw that all hope was over, and a deep swoon deprived her for a time of the consciousness of her bereavement.

When at length she recovered, she desired instantly to be led to the spot where her husband was laid ; and leaning on Claudia and her faithful Deborah, she entered the hall. In the centre of the marble pavement stood the funeral couch, yet covered with embroidered drapery. With a desperate effort Salome approached, and raising the drapery, she sunk upon her knees with a passionate exclamation of despair, to gaze upon the beloved but motionless countenance. Oh what words shall tell her feelings when she heard a struggling sigh from Zadok's lips, and saw those eyes which she believed to be closed for ever, slowly open, and fix upon her face a look of wonder and of love! She thought her brain was wandering, and covered her eyes that she might not cheat her heart with vain delusions. But then the voice of Zadok came upon her ear as if it had been the voice of an angel, and though weak and faltering, she could not doubt those tones. The ecstasy, the gratitude, the wonder, that filled and overpowered her heart, may not be described by any human pen. Those who know what it is to recover once again a being dearer far to them than their own life, alone can know what Salome felt.

Restoratives were quickly procured, and in a short time Zadok was sufficiently recovered to relate the events which had occurred, previous to the time when he was struck to the earth by a heavy blow from the butt of a broken spear ; and ere his senses returned, he must have been buried beneath the bodies that rapidly fell around him. Ananus had that night, as we have seen, omitted to go his usual rounds to inspect the guard, but had continued in deep consultation with the counsellors until long after midnight. Their deliberations were at length interrupted by a sudden and violent uproar, and on going to the entrance to discover the cause, they saw by the light of torches, that the street was filled with armed men. A shout, as if from a host of demons,

greeted the appearance of the priests and elders, and a furious rush was made by the Zealots up the flight of steps, on the summit of which they were standing. Vain was it to address them; and vain would it have been to fly. A struggle for life or death was maintained a few moments, but overpowered by numbers, they quickly fell. Zadok knew not the fate of Ananus: it was in warding off a blow aimed at the head of his chief that he had been struck to the earth, and remained insensible to the conclusion of the tragic scene.

The servant of Ananus, who had accompanied Theophilus to Zadok's house, now informed him that the aged priest had been seized and slain, and that with him was murdered Jesus, the son of Gamala. Their bodies were dragged away by the savage troop, and he feared must have been subject to the grossest indignities.

Zadok groaned when he heard that Ananus had fallen He loved and respected him as a friend; and in him alone had he placed any confidence, as the means of restoring peace to his distracted country. But his present weakness prevented him from taking any active measures, and forced him to think of his own preservation and recovery. The wound which had been so cruelly inflicted by the Idumean, had in fact been the cause of his restoration to life; for the blood had flowed freely, and combined with the rapid motion and fresh air, had removed the stupor consequent on the blow he had received, and which might doubtless have ended in death had not circulation been restored by the javelin of the robber.

It was a very happy circumstance that the fall of Zadok had been seen by many of the Zealots, and that the belief of his death became general, otherwise his well-known character would have exposed him and his family to destruction. And as his weakness compelled him, though most unwillingly, to remain idle within his own walls, no inquiries were made about him; and his

house was left unmolested, except by wandering bands of robbers, who found the gates too strong for their efforts. Amaziah, who had passed that night of horror in active exertions to assist the unoffending inhabitants, repaired to his brother's house, when he found he could no longer be of service in the contest, and that the Zealots were complete masters of the city. He had heard and believed that Zadok was slain, and his joy was great at finding his brother alive, when he had only hoped to be a support and protection to his widow. He only remained a few days with his brother, and then returned to his anxious wife, leaving Theophilus as a comfort to Salome and Claudia.

For many days the massacre continued, until at length the Zealots were weary of such indiscriminate slaughter, and affected to set up the forms of justice. They composed a Sanhedrim of seventy of the populace, and before this court they arraigned Zacharias, the son of Baruch, a man of worth and high character, and with no fault but that of being rich and patriotic. The Zealots thirsted for his wealth and his blood; and they accused him of holding correspondence with the Romans.

Zacharias boldly defended himself from their charges, and despairing of saving his life, he ridiculed his accusers, and set them at defiance, and even reproached them with their iniquity and injustice. The Zealots drew their swords, but ere they used them, they called on the judges to condemn the innocent victim. The Sanhedrim unanimously acquitted the prisoner, and declared that they would die with him rather than condemn him to death.

Then the fury of the Zealots broke forth, and two of them rushing forward, struck Zacharias dead, as he stood undaunted in the court of the holy temple. They then dragged the body along the pavement, and cast it into the abyss below. They beat the judges with their

swords, and drove them out of the court with every indignity.

The Idumeans, now satiated with plunder and revenge, began to repent of the bloody work in which they were engaged, and declared that they had come to Jerusalem to defend the city against the Romans, and not to share in murder and rapine; and they announced their intention of abandoning the Zealots to themselves. Before they departed, however, they opened all the prisons, and released two thousand of the people, who immediately fled away and joined Simon the son of Gioras. The populace, relieved of the presence of the Idumeans, began to resume their confidence, and many ventured out in open daylight, to gather up the bodies of their friends for burial, or to cast over them a little earth where they lay, to protect them from the birds of prey and ravenous dogs. But the Zealots did not lay aside their power or their cruelty, with the departure of their allies; they continued their lawless iniquities, and every day fresh victims fell.

The state of the city was well known to Vespasian, and his friends besought him to march to the capital, and at once put an end to the war. But he preferred leaving it to its own inward distractions, which he was convinced would soon bring it to utter weakness; and he was encouraged in this opinion by the multitude of deserters who every day flocked to his camp; though some of these afterwards returned to Jerusalem of their own accord, that they might die in the holy city, so great was their attachment to the hallowed spot.

During all this confusion, John of Gischala pursued his ambitious schemes; and at length all the real authority and power was centred in him. The Zealots now formed two parties; one surrounded John as a despotic chief, the other composed a lawless democracy; and both vied with each other in cruelty and oppression towards the people. To add to the miseries of war,

tyranny, and sedition, the Sicarii or Assassins, who had obtained possession of the fortress of Massada near the Dead Sea, now sallied out and surprised Engaddi, during the night of the passover (A.D. 68), and slew about seven hundred persons. Other bands collected in the neighbouring regions, and the whole country was filled with confusion and rapine.

CHAPTER VIII.

Far different to the scenes we have just described were those which Naomi was called to witness; and had not her mind been harassed with anxiety for her beloved parents and her young friend Claudia, she would have considered the days which she passed with her relatives, in their beautiful country residence, as the happiest of her life. It was not that the scenery around her was lovely, and the air was fresh and pure, in the elevated spot on which the house was situated; nor was it because Amaziah and Judith had always loved her as a daughter, and now treated her with the most affectionate kindness, that Naomi felt it was a blessed privilege to be under their peaceful roof. On the first evening of her arrival with her relatives at their country-house, Judith had proposed to her that they should walk to Bethany; and to the surprise of Naomi, they no sooner entered the village than her aunt proceeded to the cottage where Mary dwelt.

The aged Christian was alone; but solitude was not sad to her, for the bright prospects of futurity, and the blessed remembrances of the past, shed a heavenly light over her lonely and humble abode. She rose to meet her visitors with a smile of cheerful welcome; and Naomi was startled and almost terrified when she saluted her, in the hearing of her aunt, with her accustomed benediction, "The blessing of our Lord and Saviour be upon you, my child."

Judith saw what was passing in her mind, and hastened to remove her apprehensions. She took her hand, and said, "I have brought you here, my dear Naomi, that in

the presence of our venerable friend I may acknowledge to you that I also am an unworthy disciple of that Lord and Saviour whose name you have been taught to worship. She who has been the blessed instrument of bringing you to the knowledge of the truth, was also the means of removing the dark cloud of error and prejudice that hung over my mind and that of Amaziah. Many years have elapsed since the happy change took place; but our safety required that it should be kept secret; and as so much of our time has been passed in the country, our renunciation of the religion of our forefathers was not discovered. Often have I wished and prayed that the time might come when I could be permitted to instruct you, Naomi, in the truths of Christianity; but I felt that I should be abusing the confidence reposed in me by your parents if I attempted to do so without their knowledge and consent. The very strong prejudice which your excellent father entertains against the disciples of Jesus, made it hopeless for me to expect that consent; and I could only offer up my fervent prayers, that in his own good time the Lord would call you to the knowledge of himself. My prayers have been answered; and you may imagine my feelings of joy and gratitude when Mary informed me that you had confessed your sincere faith in the Son of God."

Naomi's astonishment was only equalled by her delight at finding that her beloved relatives were also united to her in the bonds of one faith, and one hope in Christ.

"Now," she exclaimed, "I shall feel that I am not alone and divided from all I love on earth. Oh that my father and my mother, and my poor misguided brother would also believe in the Redeemer, and find that rest to their souls which I never knew, until I was convinced that in him my sins were blotted out, and that by his death my salvation was purchased. And all this I owe to you, my excellent—my beloved teacher. I saw that amid poverty, and persecution, and infirmity, you were

happier than the wealthiest, the proudest of the self-righteous Jews with whom I was acquainted; and I felt sure that nothing but a *true* faith could produce the heavenly calm that reigned over your soul. And when I heard of the love and pity, the wisdom and power of Him in whom you put your trust, I could no longer wonder at your joy and peace; and thankfully I acknowledge, that, in a humble degree, the same faith and the same hope now animate my soul."

Long and interesting was the conversation of these Christian friends; and Judith informed her niece of the particulars of her own and her husband's conversion to Christianity, and their admission by baptism into the church of Christ at Jerusalem. Theophilus had also sincerely embraced the same religion, and had received the sacred rite several years since. Naomi was surprised to find how numerous had been the company of Christians in Jerusalem; until the period when James, the brother of the Lord, and the first bishop of that city, was murdered.

"Since that unhappy event, which you, Naomi, must well remember," added Judith, "the church has been dispersed and persecuted; and those of its members who have remained in Jerusalem have feared to appear so openly as they ventured to do during the life of that upright and excellent man."

"I do remember his death," replied Naomi, "and I also well remember my father's indignation at the cruel manner in which he was slain. Though he looked upon James the Just as a mistaken and deluded man, and despised his religion, yet I have often heard both him and his friends say that he well deserved the title which was bestowed on him of 'the fortress of the people,' for that he commanded the love and admiration of the whole city, from his divine temper, and his meekness and humility. My father even once declared, since the troubles of our nation commenced, that he considered the barbarous murder of that righteous and venerable man as a principal

means of bringing the wrath and the chastisements of God upon the city. He was present when James was led to the top of the temple-wall, and placed there in sight of the collected multitude below, in the hope that he would declare to them his conviction that Jesus of Nazareth was not the long-promised Messiah; and he shared in the general disappointment when, instead of doing as was expected, the venerable saint lifted up his voice, and loudly proclaimed that Jesus was the Son of God. But my father did not join in the cry to hurl him from the wall—he would have saved his life, if possible; but the infuriated populace cast him down the precipice. I have seen the tears in Zadok's eyes, when he has described to us the old man rising on his knees after the fall, in which he miraculously escaped being killed, and with uplifted hands praying for mercy on his persecutors. Oh! how hard must have been the hearts of those who could behold him thus, and not be moved to pity, but stoned him as he knelt! If he were living now, with what different feelings should I regard him from those which I entertained when, as a child, I learned to call him Nazarene, as a term of reproach, though even then I never saw his holy countenance without an emotion of awe and veneration!"

"His presence was indeed a blessing, and his death a calamity, both to Christians and to Jews," replied Judith. "He was the only one of the sacred band of apostles whom I ever knew, though I remember to have seen several of them during my youth, before they were dispersed and scattered into distant nations, when Herod stretched forth his hands to vex the church. Mary has been more highly blessed, for she was acquainted with all those chosen men, and still more blessed was she in being permitted to enjoy the presence and share the friendship of the Saviour himself."

"Yes," said Mary, "my eyes have seen those things which many prophets and kings have desired to see, and

have not seen---I have seen the Lord Jesus in his human nature, and in his humility: and now all the desire of my heart is to behold the King in his beauty, and see him on the throne of his father David. When he comes in his majesty every eye shall see him, and all shall equally confess that he is the Son of God. But oh! how will those regard him then who have rejected him in his low estate? And how will they stand before his throne of judgment who have despised his offers of mercy?"

"Is it the belief of the Christians," asked Naomi, "that the Messiah will speedily return in his glory?"

"The church looks for his coming," replied Mary, "both speedily and suddenly. Some of our brethren even expect his appearance during the life of his only remaining apostle John. But this arises from their misunderstanding the words of the Lord to Peter, when, after the resurrection of his Master, that disciple inquired of him what should be the fate of the beloved John. 'If I will that he tarry till I come,' said Jesus, 'what is that to thee?' And therefore a saying went abroad that John should not die until the Lord came again. But he himself did not so understand it: and he is now at Ephesus, anxiously awaiting the hour when he shall be summoned by death into the presence of that Lord whom on earth he loved so devotedly."

"And is John still living, then?" exclaimed Naomi. "I supposed that none remained on earth who had seen the Saviour, except you, Mary."

"Yes, the highly-favoured and divine apostle John is still alive, though of a great age. He governs the churches in Asia, and edifies the believers in every nation by his pious and holy writings, which all breathe the same spirit of Christian love and tenderness that shines so brightly in his own life and character. But John was not always the angelic being that I have described him to you. I knew him in his youth, ere the voice of Jesus had called him to be his disciple; and

then both he and his brother James were impetuous and fiery of temper. It was the love of Jesus that changed his heart, and made him what he is. His Master's character was reflected in that of the disciple whom Jesus loved."

"Surely the same effect will, in some measure, be observed in every one who contemplates the graces that were displayed in the life of the blessed Redeemer," observed Judith. "We cannot look on him with our bodily eyes, but by faith we may behold him; and the more we love him the more we shall strive to be like him. Already, my dearest Naomi, I perceive something of this change in you. Your countenance no longer expresses the same pride and self-confidence that I have always lamented in your character; and your manner is meek and gentle, like that of one who has renounced all human pride and human dependence, and consented to learn of Him who was meek and lowly of heart: and oh, may you thus find rest unto your soul—that rest which He has promised, and that peace which He alone can give. I would not wish, my child, to take from you one spark of the enthusiasm that is now directed to so noble an object, or to weaken that firmness and resolution which have always marked your disposition, and may one day be called for to enable you to bear the trials and sufferings of life. By God's grace these qualities will now be properly guided and controlled, and we shall see you, through good report and evil report, through persecutions and afflictions, or in the more dangerous trials of prosperity, exhibiting that singleness of heart and courageous determination to honour your Master's name that should always characterize his true disciples. Alas! that some should so sadly have fallen short of this resolution and courage, even among his earliest and most privileged disciples!"

"It is because I now feel the sinfulness of my own heart that I am not the proud creature I used to be,"

replied Naomi. "When I consider the purity and holiness of my Redeemer's life, and compare my own corrupt inclinations, and evil thoughts and actions, with his faultless character, surely I must feel humbled in the dust. But when I remember that that divine Being shed his blood to wash away my sins, can I fear any sufferings, any trials, by which I may prove my love and gratitude? Oh! sometimes," she continued, clasping her hands fervently, while her eyes sparkled through tears of enthusiastic emotion,—"sometimes I envy the apostles, and the blessed martyr Stephen, and all those holy Christians who have already been called to shed their blood in confirmation of their faith!"

"Trust not, my beloved Naomi, to your present ardent feelings," interrupted Mary, in a gentle voice, "nor suffer yourself to be too confident in the firmness of your faith. I pray God that you may be endued with strength by his Spirit, to carry you triumphantly through every trial that he deems fit to send upon you; but I covet neither for you nor for myself the sore temptations to which some of our brethren have already been exposed. Remember how Peter, the brave, the lion-hearted Peter, failed in the hour of danger, because he trusted in his own strength and boasted of his own courage."

"Oh yes, I do remember that sad event," replied the young Christian, somewhat abashed at the mild reproof of Mary. "That denial of Peter, and the desertion of their Master by all his disciples at the last, have always been a source of astonishment to me. I have frequently heard it related by my father, and the rabbis who frequent his house, as a strong argument against the truth of the Christian doctrines, and the belief of the disciples in the divinity of their Master. And even when I considered Jesus of Nazareth as merely a human teacher, and perhaps also as an impostor, I still wondered that those who had dwelt with him, and followed him, and

professed to believe in him, should forsake him in his hour of sorrow and suffering."

"It is indeed a humbling proof of the weakness and depravity and selfishness of the human heart," answered Mary; "and for this reason it has been faithfully recorded by some of the apostles themselves, as you have seen in the precious copy which I possess of the life of Jesus Christ, written by Matthew the publican. At the time of the Redeemer's death the Holy Spirit of God had not descended upon his disciples, and without the aid of that Spirit none can hope to stand in the time of trial. All must be born again, as our Lord himself informed Nicodemus, or they cannot enter the kingdom of God—they cannot belong to Christ on earth, or dwell with him in heaven. But when the apostles were endued with power from on high, according to the promise of their Master, then they were enabled to declare the truth with boldness, and to endure a great fight of afflictions, and at last to receive the crown of martyrdom, and enter into their rest with songs of rejoicing. In the strength of the same Spirit which supported them can we alone hope to stand, and for that Spirit let us unceasingly pray."

"But, Mary," asked Naomi, "can we expect that the Holy Spirit will descend visibly upon us, as you have told me it did upon the apostles, and give us power to work miracles, and speak with tongues as they did? Neither you nor Judith possess those gifts, and yet I feel sure that you are the true disciples of Jesus."

"No, my daughter, those gifts are now very rare; for as the Gospel of Christ has spread already over so great a part of the world, and many of almost all nations have been converted, the gift of tongues is no longer necessary. And doubtless also, the miracles that were worked so abundantly by our Lord and his first disciples, were intended in a great measure to prove that Jesus was the Son of God, and possessed the power of God, and that

his disciples were his true servants and his authorized witnesses. Those miracles cannot now be denied; they were seen by multitudes, and have been recorded by eye-witnesses, who have moreover sealed the truth of their declarations with their blood; and therefore the proof which they convey will remain to all ages, and needs not to be renewed by fresh manifestations of Divine power. The Holy Spirit now no longer descends in a visible manner, but his influence may be clearly discerned in the heart, by increasing love to God and to his Holy Son Jesus, and greater zeal in his service."

"Then may I hope," asked Naomi, "that the Lord has sent his Spirit into my heart? It is still full of evil; and every day I see that evil more clearly, and lament it more deeply; but then I also hope that I love the Lord Jesus more and more, and feel more desirous to do his will and walk in his steps."

"The feelings you describe," replied Mary, "and which I believe to be sincere, are the best proof of the presence of God's Spirit in your heart. May he ever abide with you, and strengthen you day by day for the service of the Lord, until you enter into that world where God has prepared such joys as eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive, but which shall be the portion of all those who love Him."

Naomi was moved at the affectionate earnestness of her aged friend; she silently embraced her, and as Judith now rose to depart she followed her from the cottage. The sun was setting as they left the village, and they hastened forward while the short twilight of an eastern climate yet remained to guide them. Their way led through groves and orchards and rocky ravines, and they regretted that they had been induced to remain so long at Bethany, for though this part of the country had hitherto been undisturbed by the bands of robbers who infested the more distant regions, yet Judith and her

young companion felt alarmed at finding themselves alone, so far from home, and in the rapidly increasing darkness. They had entered a thick grove of olive-trees, and were with some difficulty tracing the narrow path that led through it, when they were startled by perceiving several lights at some distance before them, and evidently approaching towards the spot where they stood. Hastily they concealed themselves among the thickest branches of the dark olive-trees, and waited in trembling anxiety until the dreaded party should pass. The lights came nearer and nearer, and those who carried them raised loud and frequent shouts, which added to the terror of Judith, until Naomi, whose eye and ear were quicker, and whose presence of mind was greater, started from her hiding-place and exclaimed, "It is Amaziah's voice! and now I see his tall figure advancing through the bushes. No doubt he has come to meet us."

"True, my child," replied Judith; "I ought first to have recognised his voice and suspected his anxious care. Let us hasten to relieve his mind of all fears on our account."

Amaziah was well pleased to see his wife and Naomi in safety. Their long absence had alarmed him, and the accounts which had reached him that day of the unsettled state of the neighbourhood, made him apprehend that danger might lurk even among the groves of Bethany, and within sight of his own dwelling. He desired that henceforth Judith and her niece should confine their rambles to the immediate vicinity of the house unless he was able to accompany them; and knowing how greatly they would both regret being deprived of the society of Mary, he kindly proposed to send a letter the following day to bring her to their own residence, where she could remain until they returned to the city.

This plan was put into execution, and on the morrow their venerable friend was established under their roof.

For many years Mary had not left her humble dwelling, to which she was fondly attached. It was but a portion of the house in which she and her sister and Lazarus had been wont to receive the visits of the Redeemer, that now remained in her possession; for poverty, and a desire for obscurity, had led her to relinquish the greater part of the range of low buildings that surrounded the courtyard, and to retain only two small apartments that opened into a narrow and unfrequented street. But the spot was dear to her heart, and she hoped to live and die in that once happy home. She had therefore hitherto declined all the requests of Amaziah and Judith that she would spend the remainder of her days with them; and it was only the hope of being useful to the young convert that now induced her to leave her obscure abode to spend some days in the spacious and beautiful villa of her Christian friends.

"What are these marble pavements and rich furniture to me," she observed one day to Naomi, "compared with the ground on which my Saviour has stood, and the seat on which he rested while I sat at his feet and listened to his words?—and what are these lofty pillars and gilded ceilings, compared with the rocky cave where once I saw him stand and call my dead brother to life with a voice of almighty power? Nothing but the consciousness that I have been permitted to assist you, my child, in the path towards eternal life, and the hope of being yet serviceable to you, could have drawn me from my beloved retreat even for a few days."

"Have you then dwelt entirely at Bethany ever since your brother was restored to life?" asked Naomi.

"Yes; both during the years that were added to his mortal life, and since he descended a second time to the grave, it has been my constant and my cherished home. For some time after my brother's resurrection we suffered much persecution and much alarm on his account. The chief priests and the Pharisees saw how many of the

people believed in Jesus after he had performed that astonishing miracle; and as they could not deny the fact that Lazarus had been dead and was alive again, they sought to kill him, that by his presence and his words he might no longer bear witness to the power of the Son of God."

"Could they suppose," exclaimed Naomi, "that He who had exerted that power to restore your brother to life, would suffer his work of love and mercy to be frustrated by their malice? Oh! how could they themselves refuse to believe in Him, when so undeniable a proof of his Godhead was before their eyes!"

"Pride and ambition and self-righteousness blinded their eyes," replied Mary. "They looked for a triumphant, kingly Messiah; and they would not receive the meek and lowly Jesus, who had not even where to lay his head, and who chose his own immediate attendants not from among the learned, or the rich, or the holy in their own eyes, but from among humble fishermen, and the yet more despised class of publicans."

"It was the belief that Christ would appear in his glory at his first advent," replied Naomi, "that so long prevented me from fully comprehending that Jesus was indeed the Messiah spoken of by all the prophets; and it is the same error that causes my father and all his pious but mistaken friends to regard the Christians as deluded fanatics. Our people are accustomed to consider only those prophecies that speak of the glory and victory of Christ, and the restoration and happiness of our nation; and all those passages which you have pointed out to me, as so wonderfully describing the humility, and sufferings, and death of Jesus, are disregarded, or supposed to relate to some other person. It now appears unaccountable to me, how I could so often, in former days, have read the book of the prophet Isaiah, and yet have doubted *who* was spoken of as the 'Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief.' Truly was he

'despised and rejected of men,' and truly have the Jews 'hid their faces from him.' Oh, when will the time come that the report of the prophets and apostles shall be believed among God's chosen people, and the arm of the Lord revealed to that nation who are called by his name!"

"It is not for us to know the times or the seasons which God hath put in his own power; but most clearly are we told by the mouths of the prophets that God has mercy yet in store for his people, and that at the end of the days they shall again be restored to greater power and greater happiness than they have ever yet enjoyed; and then will Messiah return the second time in glory, and then will all the majestic prophecies relating to his reign be accomplished. But ere that blessed time arrives our Lord himself has told us that there shall be wars and rumours of wars, and great tribulations and sorrows, such as never have been yet on the earth: but he has also told us that he that endures unto the end, the same shall be saved."

"And do you believe, Mary, that those days of tribulation are now coming on the earth, and that the Messiah will shortly appear again in glory?"

"I believe, my child, that heavy judgments are about to be inflicted on the daughter of Zion, and that those only will escape who put their trust in the Lord Jesus. It was his own command that his disciples should not remain in Jerusalem when they saw these things begin to come to pass; and at the commencement of the war he revealed to some of his devoted servants that the days of sorrow were coming, and that they must flee for refuge to the city of Pella, on the other side of the river Jordan before the city is encompassed with armies. Many of the Christians have already removed thither, and all my most valued friends, except Amaziah and Judith, are among the number. My age and obscurity and poverty have hitherto protected me from danger and

from insult; and until I find that it is no longer safe to remain at Bethany I am unwilling to leave my home. My days on earth cannot be many, and if it is the will of the Lord, I would wish to end them where I have dwelt so long; but I must not presumptuously remain in danger, from which my Lord and Master has warned me to flee; and, therefore, when I find my present abode insecure, I shall, with God's permission, follow my brethren to Pella. Doubtless Amaziah and Judith will remove thither in due time, and they will permit me to accompany them. Would to God that you and your whole family could be persuaded to do the same, Naomi, and thus escape destruction."

"My father will never leave Jerusalem while one stone stands upon another. With his feelings and his belief, I cannot wonder at it; and my mother would not be separated from him to escape the greatest sufferings or avoid the greatest dangers. Do not, then, blame me, dear Mary, if I resolve to remain at all hazards with my parents. If distresses come upon them, I can be a comfort to them; if death be their portion, I can close their eyes and shed tears over their remains. And if I fall myself, death is no longer terrible to me. I know in whom I believe; and I would not wish to survive my family, and witness the desolation of our beloved, our beautiful city."

"I have no doubt, my dear Naomi, that the Lord will make your duty clear to you when the time for decision arrives. At present I would have you remain with your natural protectors, and seek by prayer, and by every other means in your power, to promote their happiness both spiritual and temporal. But you must not throw away your life: the Lord has called you to himself, and has given you grace to believe in him to the saving of your soul, and you must in return devote yourself to him in spirit, soul, and body, and be willing to serve him on earth so long, and in such a manner, as

he in his wisdom shall appoint. It is indeed a blessed change, when the believer falls asleep, and his spirit wings its way unfettered to the presence of his Saviour and his God: but we must wait his time, and bless him for every day in which we can glorify him and serve our fellow creatures."

"That is true, Mary, and yet I often wish to die; and I have thought, while reflecting on your brother's being recalled to life, that it would have been better for him to have remained in the grave. His spirit must have been blest, for he was the friend of Jesus; and it seems sad for him to return to this cold world again, and mix in its cares and its troubles, and even to dwell in it so many years after the light of the Saviour's countenance was removed."

"Your feeling is perhaps a natural one," replied Mary, "but Lazarus never murmured at his rest being delayed a few short years. He was thankful to be restored to us, and to be allowed again to be our comfort and our joy; and he was thankful to be permitted to be a witness of his Master's power, and to have the privilege of so greatly adding to the number of his disciples. When again his time was fully come, most joyfully did he resign his spirit into the hands of his beloved Master; and then did I and my sister Martha once again weep over his grave: but, oh! how different were our feelings then, from those which harrowed our souls at his first departure from us. When the second time he expired, which occurred only seven years ago, we would not have recalled him to life if we could have done so; for then we knew that his ransomed spirit had fled to the presence of his Saviour, and there we hoped ere long to rejoin him. Martha followed him very shortly, and I remained alone. I have had many Christian friends, and many consolations and blessings, but nothing could restore the earthly happiness I once enjoyed. My heart is now in heaven, where my treasure

is; and there, through God's mercy in Jesus Christ, I trust I shall soon meet those who have passed through the valley of the shadow of death before me."

The conversation was interrupted by a summons for Naomi to join her uncle and aunt, who were about to set forth on their return to Jerusalem; and Mary also took leave of them, and proceeded with an attendant towards her native village. Amaziah and his party had not gone far on their way, when, as we have already related, Theophilus met them with the dreadful tidings of the arrival of the Idumeans, and they hastened back to their secluded dwelling. The safety of Mary was immediately thought of, and a messenger was dispatched in pursuit of her. She had not reached Bethany when he overtook her; and before Amaziah and his son left their home and returned to Jerusalem, their aged and revered friend was again safely lodged under their roof. The house was situated in a commanding position, and being strongly built, and partially fortified since the recent disturbances, it was looked upon as a place of sufficient security until Amaziah could take further measures for the removal of his family, either to his dwelling in the city, or, if necessary, to Pella.

The events of that dreadful night and the succeeding days have been already recorded; and when Amaziah returned from the bloody city to his quiet home in the mountains, he could hardly believe that such scenes were yet going forward within so short a distance from the peaceful spot. But he could not conceal from himself, that however tranquil all appeared around them, their present abode was no longer a secure one, and he proceeded with the greatest dispatch to make the needful preparations for removing to Pella. Naomi was greatly shocked and distressed at the account which her uncle brought of the state of her family, and of her father's severe wounds, and consequent illness. She would instantly have hastened to rejoin them, and lend her aid

in nursing and cheering her beloved parents and her friend Claudia, but it was quite impossible for her to enter the city under the present circumstances; and Amaziah also brought her a letter from Salome, in which she was desired by her parents to continue under the protection of her uncle, and to accompany him to whatever place he might find it desirable to make his temporary residence.

Amaziah declared his intention of retiring to Pella, as the refuge pointed out by express revelation, where the people of the Lord should hide themselves until this tyranny should be overpast; and though Naomi would gladly have encountered danger and suffering to be again with her father and mother, she could not but rejoice in the prospect of spending some weeks in the company of a society of Christians, where she might observe their manners and share their worship, and even be admitted by baptism among the members of the true church. The removal to Pella was soon effected; and Mary consented to accompany her friends, in the hope that when the Idumean army had departed and the present violent disturbances were quelled, she might be permitted again to return to Bethany and end her days.

During the whole of the winter the civil war raged in Jerusalem with unabated violence, and it was impossible for Naomi to rejoin her family. Occasionally Theophilus contrived to send intelligence to Pella of the proceedings in the city; and by his messengers Naomi received long and affectionate letters from her parents and Claudia, and enjoyed the satisfaction of knowing that her father's health was restored, and that he and his family were safe and unmolested. How long their security might last was very uncertain, as the robbers and assassins became daily more powerful and more insatiable, notwithstanding the efforts of the other party; and Naomi trembled for her friends. Her fervent prayers were joined to those of her Christian brethren for the pre-

servation of those so dear to her, amid the destruction that threatened them; and still more fervently did she pray that they might be brought to the knowledge of the Gospel, and preserved from the far more terrible destruction which she believed was yet to come upon her nation, and to swallow up all who wilfully despised the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Every day did that grace become more precious to her, and her faith become more lively and more deep. The beautiful and simple forms of worship that were observed by the Christians powerfully affected her heart In the meetings of this holy band all was calm and peaceful: tears of deep devotion and unaffected humility stole silently down the cheeks of many a once hardened sinner, and many a young and ardent convert, as they knelt together in their unadorned sanctuary, and joined in the prayers and confessions which were pronounced by the elders of the community. Meekly they bowed their knees; but there were no prostrations on the earth, no outward gestures or vehement excitement; and their prayers were offered up with the devotion of creatures before their Creator, the love of ransomed sinners before their Redeemer, and the confidence of children before a Father, who has promised, that wheresoever two or three are gathered together in his name, there will He be in the midst of them. Those who had witnessed the imposing magnificence of the temple-service, and beheld the thronging multitudes, the glittering gold and jewelled dresses of the priests, the costly sacrifices, the clouds of incense, the marble pavements and splendid altars, and listened to the brazen trumpets and united voices of the choristers, that were ordained to impress the senses, and fix the attention of the Jews, might have smiled at the simplicity of this little church in the wilderness. Frequently they held their meetings in the silence and the obscurity of night, and selected some neighbouring glen or rocky recess in the moun-

tains as their place of worship. There, undisturbed by the Jews who dwelt in Pella, they united their voices in hymns of prayer and praise, while the caverns re-echoed the loud "Amen," and repeated the joyful "Hallelujahs" of these poor and exiled brethren. Naomi's soul was lifted up with gratitude and devotion; and she felt that this was an offering and a sacrifice more worthy of the Redeemer, and more acceptable to him than all the blood of bulls and goats, that were only a type of his own complete and all-atoning sacrifice. She ardently desired to be received into the Christian church by baptism, and allowed to partake in the holy communion of the body and blood of Christ; and when she was considered to be duly instructed in the doctrines of her newly-adopted religion, and had satisfied the catechists and elders that her faith was sincere and her conduct consistent, the ceremony was performed with the same pious simplicity that distinguished all the outward manners and customs of the primitive Christians. Naomi rejoiced in being permitted thus to make an open profession of her faith, and of her firm resolution, by the grace of God and the help of his Spirit, to "renounce the devil and all his works, powers, and service," and "the world, and all its pomps and pleasures." Her mind was fully made up as to her future line of conduct; and much as she dreaded her father's displeasure, she was determined, on her return to Jerusalem, to confess to him her conversion to Christianity, and her firm resolve to live according to the dictates of that religion, and no longer to conform to the rites and ceremonies of Judaism. She knew his violent prejudices against the religion of the Nazarenes; and she knew how grieved and disappointed both he and her mother would be when they found that she had renounced the way of her fathers, and adopted the faith which they so greatly despised. But then she trusted to her Saviour to support her under all trials, and carry her through all temptations which were incurred for his

name's sake; and she felt that she could not without hypocrisy any longer conceal her true belief, or appear to take part in the Jewish rites and customs, that were so strictly observed in her father's house. She hoped also that Zadok's fond affection for her would prevent him from using any harsh measures; and she knew that her mother's gentle and forgiving temper would not long cherish anger towards her; but that she would use all her influence with her husband, to soften his heart towards his beloved and hitherto dutiful and obedient daughter. Therefore she checked her fears and her anxieties, and strove to derive all the benefit that was possible from the intercourse of the pious company, with whom she was so unexpectedly and so happily permitted to dwell.

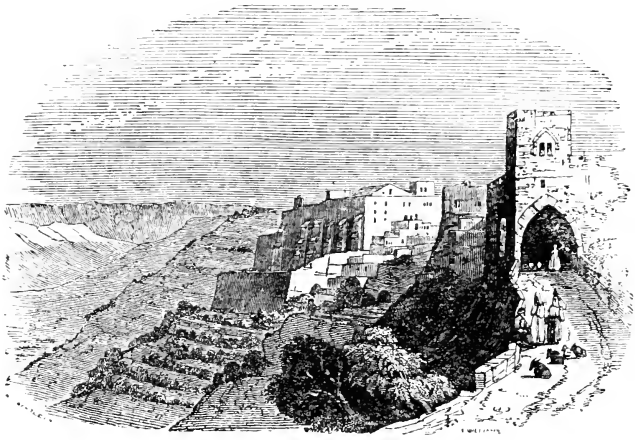
The privilege of attending the Holy Eucharist, or Supper of the Lord, was allowed to the young Christian after her baptism; and she frequently and thankfully partook of it, to the strengthening and refreshing of her soul. In those early days this sacrament was administered to baptized believers on every Lord's day, and also on many other occasions. In some churches it was celebrated four times a week; and it is even recorded, that while (in the words of St. Chrysostom) "the spirit of Christianity was yet warm and vigorous, and the hearts of men passionately inflamed with the love of Christ," they communicated every day; and found themselves stronger and healthier, and more able to encounter the fierce oppositions that were made against them, the oftener they fed at the table of their crucified Saviour. Would to God that the same love of Christ now animated the hearts of all who have been admitted as members of his visible church! We should not then see his table neglected, and his command disregarded, as now we do; and the same blessed results might be expected. We, like our holy fathers in the faith, should become "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his

might;" we should indeed "eat his flesh and drink his blood," and find it to be "the food that nourishes to salvation."

The manner of celebrating the holy sacrament in the first days of the church differed very much from that which we are accustomed to see, as a banquet or supper usually preceded the administration of the consecrated elements. These repasts were called Agapæ, or Love-feasts; and there rich and poor met together as equals, and partook in common of the food which was provided from the oblations and gifts of the communicants, which were always bestowed, according to their respective ability, for this purpose, and for the relief of the poor.

In her intercourse with the Christians, Naomi could not but observe and admire the sobriety which marked their apparel, the temperance which they observed in regard to their food, and the modesty and simplicity that reigned in their whole deportment. They were governed by the rule of the apostle, who directed his converts, "having food and raiment, therewith to be content;" and while they avoided singularity and affectation, they were careful to fall into no excess, and indulge in no vanity or worldly pleasures. Naomi contrasted the jewelled tiaras, the embroidered shawls, the silken robes and sashes fringed with pearls, the massive and highly-wrought armlets and bracelets, the golden clasps, and all the other dazzling ornaments and glowing colours that then distinguished the attire of the wealthy Jews, with the plain and sober garb of her new associates; and she felt how much more suitable was the appearance of the Christians to the condition of those who are but "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," and profess to seek a home in heaven. All her own ornaments, with which the indulgence of her father had liberally supplied her, were laid aside; and she would have disposed of hem all, and given the product to her needy brethren,

had not Judith reminded her, that as the gifts of Zadok, she had no right to part with them without his consent; and especially for the relief of those who were in his judgment unworthy of the air they breathed, and not to be approached by a faithful son of Abraham without contamination.



CHAPTER IX.

The winter passed away, and it was now the spring of the year 68, and the commencement of a new campaign. The Jews who had deserted, or fled for refuge to the camp of Vespasian, earnestly besought him to march without further delay towards the capital; but the Roman general thought it more prudent to defer that step until he had reduced the rest of the country. The first place which he attacked was Gadara, the chief city of Peræa. Some of the most influential inhabitants sent a deputation to meet and conciliate Vespasian; and the rebellious party, after revenging themselves on some of those who had offered to surrender, withdrew from the city, and the conqueror was received with acclamations of joy. A garrison was placed in Gadara, for the protection of the inhabitants; and Vespasian having dispatched Placidus, with five hundred horse and three thousand foot-soldiers, to pursue the insurgents who had fled from the city, returned to Cæsarea with the rest of his forces. The fugitives had taken possession of a large village called Bethanabris, which they fortified as well as lay in their power. The Romans attacked them in their place of refuge; and being unable to scale the walls or force the gates, Placidus employed his favourite stratagem to draw them from their hiding-place. He feigned a retreat; and when the Gadarenes sallied forth to pursue his army, he faced round, and getting between them and the gates, effectually cut off their retreat. Before night the village was taken and destroyed, with a

dreadful slaughter. Those of the insurgents who escaped, fled towards Jericho, and being joined by a number of the peasants on their way, they became a considerable body before they reached the eastern bank of the Jordan, near Bethabara. Here Placidus overtook them: and the river being much swollen, they found it impassable, and were compelled to turn and fight.

The Romans charged with all their accustomed vigour, and multitudes of the half-armed peasants and wearied fugitives fell before them. Hundreds were driven into the rapid and foaming waters, and many plunged in of their own accord, to escape the swords of their assailants. The river was almost choked with bodies, and countless numbers were carried down the stream into the Dead Sea, and lay floating on its dark and stagnant waters. Fifteen thousand were killed on this spot, and upwards of two thousand taken prisoners; while an immense number of cattle of every description were driven off as a valuable prey, from that fertile and pastoral district. Placidus did not immediately rejoin the main body of the Roman army, but remained for some time in that neighbourhood, and reduced the whole country of Peræa, and the coast of the Dead Sea, as far as Machærus.

The moon was high in the heavens, and her clear and silver light fell softly on the bleak and barren scenery around, and glittered on the motionless surface of the deadly "sea of the plain." No sound of life broke the oppressive stillness of the night, save the footsteps of a solitary soldier, who slowly wandered along the margin of the lake, and gazed on the dark outline of the ruins that yet remained near the shore, a standing witness of the wrath of God on the sinful cities of the plain. The shattered remnants of walls and towers were covered over with a coating of asphaltum or bitumen, which preserved them from crumbling away; and the margin of the sea was strewed with pieces of the same bituminous substance, thrown up from the depths below, where all

the wealth and all the grandeur of Sodom and Gomorrah lay engulfed in utter ruin. Who has ever looked upon the black expanse without a shudder? Marcellus felt that the scourge of God had passed over the spot, and he contemplated it with intense interest. Life was extinct around him—no animal bounded over the sterile rocks, no bird sank to rest in the small tufts of shrubs that scantily covered their surface. The low monotonous sound of the distant Jordan, forcing its way through the heavy waters, and the sighing of the wind among the reeds, only added to the gloom of the scene. Marcellus had been disgusted that day with the cruelty and bloodshed which he had witnessed. He had fought like a Roman, for glory and for victory; but he had remembered that he was a Christian soldier, and had shown mercy where mercy was possible. He had endeavoured to restrain the wanton massacre that was carried on by his comrades; and had exposed himself to the charge of cowardice and faint-heartedness for his humanity. But his conscience approved his conduct; and he rambled from the distant camp to enjoy the silence and calm of the night, and to commune with his own heart and with his God in peace. He ascended the rocky cliffs that bounded the lake to the west, and looked over the sleeping water, and the lower eminences on the eastern shore, until his eye rested on the far distant towers and fortresses of Jerusalem. The moonlight sparkled on the gilded pinnacles of the temple; and the clear blue sky threw out the summits of the lofty buildings in bold relief. Marcellus thought that Naomi was within those walls; and, oh, how his heart yearned to be permitted to join her there, to share her anxieties and her dangers, and to protect and cheer her in the coming days of trouble and of woe! But he was enrolled among the ranks of her enemies, and he must be among those who would seek the ruin and destruction of her beloved city.

His only consolation was the hope, that when the

Roman army should actually besiege the walls of Jerusalem, and as he doubted not, carry the city by storm, he might have it in his power to preserve the lives of Naomi and her family; and this hope made him rejoice, that since he could not take part with her countrymen, he was at length brought to the scene of action, and should be near her, though numbered with her foes. The fate of Jerusalem, so awfully predicted by the Messiah, pressed heavily on his mind; for who in that day should escape but the people of the Lord? He knew the bigotry of Zadok, and he feared that Naomi inherited all his prejudices, and shared his abhorrence of the Nazarenes. His dear sister too, what would become of her? Hitherto Rufus had found it impossible to have her safely conveyed from the city to the camp, though he had sought earnestly to find an opportunity of doing so ever since the war had approached the neighbouring regions; but the distracted state of the metropolis rendered it impracticable; and if Vespasian were now to march to the attack, Claudia must remain among the besieged.

The reflections of Marcellus were deep and melancholy; and almost unconsciously he wandered on, and was descending the rocky boundary of the dismal lake, by a path that led into a narrow valley to the east, when he started from his reverie at the sound of footsteps, hastily approaching towards him. The light of the moon was intercepted by the lofty rocks that overhung the pathway, and Marcellus did not recognise the figure of Javan, until the latter advanced close to him, and presenting a drawn sword, fiercely demanded who went there. The voice discovered him to the young Roman, who immediately perceived that Javan had escaped from the camp, and was now hastening through these unfrequented valleys, in the hope of making his way round the southern extremity of the Dead Sea, and rejoining his countrymen in Judea.

"Is it you, Javan?" he replied; "you may sheath your sword, for you need fear no evil from me. But tell me, wherefore are you here?"

"I have fled from captivity, Marcellus. Liberty is the right of every man, and especially of every Jew. Had I met any other Roman in this dark glen, revenge and self-preservation would have urged me to plunge my sword into his bosom; but I can trust you, though a heathen."

"I have not the power to compel you to return to the camp," replied Marcellus; "otherwise it would be my duty, however unwillingly, to do so. You were on your oath, Javan, to remain within the palisades; and to effect your escape you must have bribed Clodius, who had the charge of you, and broken a sacred promise. Let me entreat you to redeem your word, and return with me to the camp."

"What is there binding to a Jew in an oath taken to a heathen, and that oath a compulsory one?" answered Javan, in a tone of contempt. "The life and liberty of one son of Abraham are worth a hundred promises; and the wily Romans have deserved no confidence at our hands."

"The word of every man should be sacred," said Marcellus; "the Almighty Jehovah heard and recorded your promise, and in his sight you are guilty of falsehood."

"What is the Lord of Israel to you, Marcellus? and why do you utter his great name with so much reverence?" asked Javan, with an involuntary feeling of awe.

"Because I have learnt to acknowledge your God as King of kings, and Lord of lords, and to know that all our thoughts, and words, and actions lie open before his eye; and therefore, Javan, I should fear to be guilty of a wilful sin against his holy laws, more than to dwell in captivity, or even to be put to a violent death."

"If you, Marcellus, have been taught the knowledge

of the true God, yet Clodius and the rest of your comrades are but base idolaters. I would not break my word to a Jew: but now I am free, and I rejoice too much in my liberty to resign it for the sake of a promise to a Roman. Farewell, Marcellus; I hasten to Judea; and when next we meet, it may be at the walls of Jerusalem."

"Since you are resolved to go we will part as friends," replied Marcellus, extending his hand towards Javan, who received it, though with an air of suspicion, and at the same moment grasping his sword-hilt, to guard against any treacherous design on the part of the Roman.

"You do not yet know me, Javan," said Marcellus: 'I trust one day we may be better acquainted. My sister Claudia is in your father's house; I charge you to be a brother to her, until we can find means of conveying her to a place of greater safety. Bear to her my most affectionate salutation and blessing—and to Naomi also—may I not send the same message to her? She lives in my memory and in my heart as a beloved sister. It may be that the time will come when a friend in the Roman camp may be of service to her and her family. Tell her, Javan, that Marcellus will use every influence, and brave every danger to promote the safety and the happiness of those whom he has loved so long."

There was something in the tone and manner of the noble young Roman that softened even Javan's rugged nature. "Forgive me, that I doubted you for a moment, Marcellus," he replied; "you were always brave and generous, and kind; and I will bear your message to my sister, though I fear she will value it more than will be for her peace. She has always regarded you more kindly than a Jewish maiden should have done; and it will but revive her girlish affection to hear, that amid the gaiety and magnificence of Rome, and the toil and excitement of a camp, you still remember her. I hope she never may be reduced to need the protection of any Roman; but should such be her fate, there is not one of that

proud nation to whom I would so willingly or so confidently consign her as to you."

With these words Javan left his friend, who watched his dark figure as he traversed the valley, and emerged into the bright moonlight, that rendered the open plains as clear as in the day. Marcellus envied him, for he was going where Naomi dwelt; and it would be his privilege to protect her in time of danger: but he pitied the deceit and the pride of his heart, which could induce him to seek safety and freedom at the expense of truth, and regard his captors as unworthy to be treated with the faith and confidence due from man to man, whether friends or foes.

He returned to the camp, and found Clodius in great dismay at the flight of Javan. He had allowed his prisoner more liberty than was usual, in dependence on his promise to remain in the precincts of the camp; and he feared the anger of the centurion, who had the command over him. Great power was in the hands of the centurions; and they might chastise with blows any offending member of their company; but only the generals could punish with death. Happily for Clodius, his commander was Rufus, and he was a just and a merciful man. Marcellus also undertook to state the case to his father, and persuade him to intercede with Placidus for the pardon of the delinquent, which was at length obtained, though such was the strictness and severity of the Roman discipline, that but for the influence of Rufus and his son, it is probable that Clodius might even have forfeited his life for his negligence.

Placidus having completed the conquest of Peræa, remained in the neighbourhood of Jericho, to await the further movements of Vespasian, who was at this time greatly disturbed by the news which had just reached him of the state of affairs at Rome. Vindex had revolted against the power of the emperor in the province of Gaul; and Vespasian foreseeing that his army might be required

to take part in the war consequent on this rebellion, was very desirous to hasten the operations in Palestine, and put an end to the war without loss of time. He marched from Cæsarea, and successively attacked and reduced Antipatris, Lydda, and Jamnia, and blockaded Emmaus, which for some time resisted his forces. But Vespasian did not suffer this event to delay his progress; he seized on the avenues leading to the city, fortified his camp with a strong wall, and leaving the fifth legion to maintain the blockade, he proceeded southwards through the toparchy of Bethleptepha, wasting all around with fire and sword. From thence he entered Idumea, and seized and fortified such castles and fortresses as he found convenient for his designs, and took also Bataris and Cephartoba, two towns in the very heart of the country, where he put to the sword upwards of ten thousand men, and carried away a great number of prisoners. In these towns he placed a strong body of troops, and left them to overrun and ravage all the neighbouring mountainous region. He himself, with the rest of his forces, returned to Emmaus, and thence by Samaria and Neapolis to Jericho, where he was joined by the army which had been employed in the conquest of Peræa.

Before the arrival of the Romans, a multitude of the inhabitants fled from Jericho, and took refuge among the mountains that bound the wilderness of Judea, on the borders of the Dead Sea; but those who remained in the city perished. Vespasian found this important place almost deserted, and his army entered it without resistance; and gladly reposed for some time among the fertile and lovely gardens, and the shady groves of palm-trees that lay around the city, before they proceeded to traverse the dreary and mountainous desert that lay between Jericho and Jerusalem. The plain of Jericho is surrounded by wild and barren mountains, extending northward as far as the country of Scythopolis and southward towards the shores of the Dead Sea, and the great

plain of the Jordan. This very extensive plain may be said to reach almost the whole length of Palestine, and to contain within its limits the two seas or lakes of Genesareth and Asphaltites. These lakes are united by the Jordan; but their waters are of the most opposite qualities, those of the former being sweet and salubrious, while the latter gives nourishment to neither animal nor vegetable life, but diffuses barrenness and death around its dismal shores.

At the period when Vespasian encamped at Jericho, it was a luxuriant and delicious spot. A plentiful fountain rose near the old city, and poured its copious streams among the adjoining meadows and orchards. Tradition related that this fountain was the same that in the days of old was healed by the prophet Elisha, when at the request of the men of the city, he cast salt into the spring of the waters, and rendered them henceforth sweet and wholesome, and the ground was no more barren. The district that received the benefit of this fertilizing stream was fruitful to a wonderful degree, and produced fruits and herbs and honey of the finest quality. The climate also appeared to be affected by the temperature of the water, which in winter was very warm; and the air was so mild that though the other parts of Judea were subject to snows, the inhabitants of Jericho were accustomed at that season to wear only a garment of fine linen.

Here did Vespasian take up his quarters, while he sent detachments to reduce all the neighbouring country. He dispatched Lucius Annius to Gerasa, with part of the cavalry and a considerable body of foot-soldiers; and at the first charge they took the city, and slew a thousand of the young men. The families were carried away captive, and the soldiers had full license to plunder all their goods; after which the houses were burnt, and Lucius proceeded to the adjoining towns.

The fury of the war spread through all the mountains as well as the plains around Jerusalem, and the inhabi-

tants of the metropolis were entirely blocked up. Those who would gladly have made their escape, and fled to the Romans, were narrowly watched by the Zealots; and those who had no wish to favour the conquering army were afraid to venture forth, as their forces now invested the city on every side. Every day they looked out, in the fearful expectation of seeing the golden eagles glittering on the plain to the north, and the enemy approaching to their very gates.

But it pleased the Almighty Disposer of all events yet to postpone for a time the destruction of the place where once his honour dwelt; and to allow his people a still longer time in which they might by repentance seek to avert their doom, and also make preparations for a more regular and vigorous resistance. News arrived from Rome that Nero was slain, after he had reigned thirteen years, and that Galba was proclaimed emperor in his stead. Vespasian paused in his operations, and held his army together, though inactive, that he might be ready to take advantage of any events that should arise to open a way for him towards the sovereignty of the Roman empire.

When the army of Vespasian had approached the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, Zadok feared that Pella was no longer a safe retreat for his daughter; and with some difficulty he sent a messenger and a small band of armed men to Amaziah, to entreat him to return with Judith and Naomi to the city. Amaziah put perfect faith in the revealed promise, that the disciples of Jesus should be safe in the refuge which had been appointed for them, and he wished to remain there and keep his niece with him. But he knew that his confidence in the security of their present abode would neither be shared nor understood by his brother, and Naomi also was very anxious to rejoin her family; he therefore complied with their wishes, and immediately made arrangements for returning to Jerusalem. Amaziah did not, however, take Judith or Mary with him, but they remained at Pella with her

Christian friends, until he had safely deposited Naomi in her father's house, when he hastened back to the chosen city, to abide there in conformity to the command of the Lord, until Vespasian should withdraw his troops from the neighbourhood.

But we must follow Naomi to her home, and tell of her joys and her sorrows. She was received with the warmest affection and delight by her mother and Claudia and old Deborah; but Zadok was at the temple at the time when she and Amaziah entered his house. He was engaged in the performance of divine service, for the form of worship was still continued whenever it was possible, though the house of God was defiled with blood and violence. Naomi and the rest of the family were seated on the housetop, enjoying the evening breeze from the mountains, and the delicious odour of the fine Persian roses that grew luxuriantly in rich marble vases placed on the roof, when they heard the voice of Zadok in the vestibule below. How joyfully did Naomi bound down to meet and embrace her father; and how affectionately did Zadok receive his beloved daughter, after her long and anxious separation from him! But there was a mixture of fear and sorrow in the heart of Naomi, and she trembled with a feeling nearly allied to self-reproach as she was folded in the arms of her father, for she knew how soon his high opinion of her would be changed into contempt, and perhaps even his affection into hatred. She had resolved to declare to him her conversion to Christianity, and to implore his permission to observe the customs and the sabbaths of her brethren in the faith: but she felt that all her own courage would be insufficient to support her through the dreaded avowal; and she lifted up her heart in silent supplication for grace and strength to enable her to take up the cross and carry it after her Saviour, even if it should involve the severest trials and domestic persecutions. She had requested her uncle to be present at her confession, as

she thought that his kindness and sympathy would support her, and his influence with her father might also soften his anger towards her. It was likewise Amaziah's intention to confide to his brother his own change of religion and that of his wife, and to urge him to read and examine for himself the records of the Christians, and to weigh well their pretensions to truth and divine revelation. He hardly hoped to obtain any concession on these points from his prejudiced but high-minded brother; yet he could not bid him farewell, perhaps for ever, without making one effort to enlighten his mind and open to him the true way of salvation.

The evening meal was served, and after it was finished, Zadok, according to his general custom, called his family to join in prayer before they retired to rest. The forms he used were in strict accordance with the Jewish ritual; but the piety and devotion to God's service which were expressed both in the words and the manner of the priest were such as would do honour to any Christian worship, and Naomi joined with heart and voice in celebrating the evening service to which she had been accustomed from her earliest childhood. At the same time she felt how imperfect and how unsatisfactory were any prayers that were not offered up in the name and through the mediation of the Saviour of mankind, and secretly she invoked his aid; while she concluded every petition with the words so precious to her soul, "For the sake of Jesus Christ, thy Son."

Her feelings were highly excited, and unconsciously she repeated this solemn adjuration in an audible whisper, as her father terminated the evening's devotions, and no other voice prevented her soul-felt prayer from being heard. In an instant she was aware of the inadvertency; and rising from her knees, she turned and saw the keen eye of Zadok fixed upon her with an expression of anxious inquiry, mingled with astonishment. She had intended to defer the important avowal of her faith until

the following day, and to request an audience with Zadok, with no one present except her uncle; but now she saw that her long-cherished secret was already divulged. She approached her father with faltering steps, and sinking on her knees at his feet, she caught the hem of his embroidered robe, and exclaimed, "Yes, my father, I have betrayed myself sooner than I had intended; I have called on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; and oh—spurn me not from you when I declare myself to be his most unworthy disciple!"

Words could not paint the feelings that chased each other across the expressive but stern countenance of the priest, as this open avowal of her apostasy fell from the quivering lips of his daughter. Horror and amazement held him motionless for a few moments, and strong affection for his suppliant child restrained him from any violent expression of anger; but all the prejudices of his nation and all the pride of his sect repressed his rising pity. He looked on Naomi with an expression of bitter disappointment and contempt; and unable to command the grief that wrung his heart, he drew his garment from her convulsive grasp, and would have retired from the apartment had not Amaziah detained him.

"Zadok, my brother," he said, "leave us not thus in anger; but hear your innocent, your most devoted daughter, towards whom I know your spirit yearns, though deep-rooted prejudice would prompt you to cast her from you. Hear me also, for I must encounter your wrath and your scorn. I must confess that the faith which now animates Naomi's soul has for many years been established in my own heart and that of my wife, and that we have been in part God's instruments in strengthening the same belief in your daughter's mind. The knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ was imparted to her many months ago by one of his most enlightened and most favoured disciples; and when we found that she believed in him as the Messiah, the Son

of the Most High God, we joyfully encouraged her, and instructed her in the truth."

"Oh, fool that I was," exclaimed Zadok, "to suffer my treasure to be so long removed from my own care and my own watchful guardianship! But how could I look for such a return from a brother's hands, for all the love that I have ever borne towards him? Speak not to me, Amaziah. Had you plunged a dagger to Naomi's heart you would have less deeply injured me, than by thus instilling into her guileless breast the doctrines of the impostor of Nazareth. Oh! I have watched her from her infancy with feelings of anxiety and affection which none but a father can tell. I have exulted in her abilities, her graces, and still more, in her piety and zeal, and knowledge in our holy religion; and in her dutiful affection and gratitude I hoped to receive a rich reward for all my care and solicitude. But now what has she become? A curse and a shame to her parents—an apostate from the only true faith—a believer in a blasphemous creed, worse even than idolatry, founded on impostures, invented by a malefactor, who was unable to save himself or his followers from the punishment which they drew on themselves by their false pretensions. O God of Israel! avenge thy great name, and suffer not these deluded Nazarenes to draw away thy lambs from thy fold. Restore my child to her religion and her parents, and let her not be an outcast from thy people, a disgrace to the tribe of Aaron!"

Zadok spoke with all the passionate vehemence so characteristic of his Hebrew blood. His hands were clasped energetically, his eyes flashed fire, and his whole form seemed animated with powerful emotion. Salome gazed alternately on him and on her stricken child, whose head was bowed to the ground in humiliation and sorrow, while her long black hair fell in profusion over her neck and face, and concealed the tears which she strove ineffectually to repress. Her mother could not

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feel the indignation that filled the breast of Zadok; she could not forget that Naomi, however erring, was still her only, her most beloved daughter, and she stooped to raise her from the floor, and to whisper words of comfort. But Naomi refused to rise. "Oh, my mother," she murmured, "has not my father cursed me? Let me lie in dust and ashes, until once more I hear his voice recall those dreadful words, and bless his child."

"He cursed thee not, my Naomi; he only spoke in sorrow and in anger of the sad change that has been wrought in you. But tell him that you will listen again to his instructions—tell him that you will strive to shake off and forget the errors into which you have so unhappily been led, and he will bless you again, and joy will yet return to our house. I will kneel with you, my child. Zadok never yet denied me what I asked. I will plead for you, and promise for you that you will return to the holy religion of your ancestors."

Salome's tears fell fast as she uttered these words, and she knelt by her daughter's side before the dignified form of her husband. He could not see her thus abase herself before him unmoved, nor behold the tears that flowed down her gentle countenance without emotion He approached, and raised her from the ground, while he replied in a softened tone, "For thy dear sake, Salome, I will pardon the child for whom you plead so well. But I only restore her to my favour, and acknowledge her as my daughter, on the terms which you yourself have named. She shall promise no more to use the name of the God of the Nazarenes, and she shall attend to all the forms and customs of our religion, and again receive instruction from our most holy rabbis and from myself, on the points concerning which her faith has been shaken. Naomi, promise me this, and then come back to my arms and my heart, as my own lovely and beloved child."

Even Zadok's self-command was failing, and the

natural tenderness of his heart was ready to triumph over the lofty calmness that usually distinguished his manner and deportment. His wife and Claudia, Deborah, and all the other attendants wept aloud from sympathy and anxiety, while Amaziah bent his eyes on Naomi, and waited in almost breathless expectation of her reply to the appeal of Zadok. She had raised her face, and shaken back her clustering hair from her pale brow and weeping eyes, while Salome's words of kindness were whispered in her ear, and she had sought to interrupt her mother when she spoke of forgetting the faith she had so lately learned. But when Zadok addressed her she paused in deep reverence, and waited in silence until he called for her reply. Then she rose from her knees, and stood erect and self-possessed. Her mother's promise that she should return to the Jewish faith had startled her, and recalled her to a sense of her duty, and a confident reliance on the aid she had implored to keep her firm and unshaken under every temptation and trial. Her countenance was as pale as death, and the beating of her heart was almost audible, yet she spoke firmly.

"My father, you have commanded me to renounce the faith which I have embraced because I feel that it is true. Sooner could I gaze up at the noonday sun, and say that it gives no light, than I can behold the character of Jesus of Nazareth, and say that the glory of the Godhead shines not therein. My soul was dark, my heart was hard, my spirit was proud and unhumbled, and therefore I knew not peace; when many months ago I met an aged disciple of Jesus Christ, and she told me of his power and his love, and the words that he spake, and the miracles that he wrought. She told me how he left his Father's throne on high, and lived with sinful men, in poverty and affliction on earth, to teach them how they ought to live. And she told me how at length he died, a sacrifice for sin and an atonement for

us sinners; and having borne his Father's wrath, and drained the cup of sorrow that was mixed for us, how he rose triumphant from the grave, and ascended again to his God and our God, there to plead his death for our forgiveness, and to prepare mansions of everlasting peace and joy for all who truly love and serve him. When I heard all this, my father, I felt my heart was changed. Could I be too grateful to him who had done so much for me? Could I feel proud and self-righteous when the Son of God had died to wash away my guilt? Could I any longer put my trust in the blood of calves and goats to wash away my sin, when the blood of the Messiah had been shed as a perfect oblation and satisfaction? I received the Lord Jesus as my God and Saviour, and he has given rest unto my soul. Never, never will I forsake Him who gave himself for me!—never will I renounce that name whereby alone I hope to be saved!"

Naomi had gathered courage as she continued, and ere she concluded her reply the colour had returned to her cheek, her eyes had recovered their wonted brightness, and her hands were clasped in an attitude of firmness and devotion. She was astonished at her own boldness, and still more at the forbearance with which her father listened to the end. Zadok, and all who heard her, were struck and impressed by the earnestness and solemnity of her manner, and could not repress the admiration that was excited by the zeal and the firmness she displayed. Amaziah rejoiced with thankfulness at this evident proof that she was sustained by the grace of God, and he felt proud in being the relative and the instructor of the devoted creature who stood before him. At length Zadok spoke:

"Would to God, Naomi, that all this warmth of feeling, and this firmness of spirit, were directed in the way of truth and reason. Alas! I can now only deplore that the powers of your soul have been so misled. My

heart is wounded within me, and I am unable to answer you as I ought to do. Go to your chamber, and remain there until I either visit you to-morrow, or call for you to listen to the teaching of Rabbi Joazer. If you return to your duty and your religion all shall be forgiven; but if the delusions of the evil spirit cannot be removed, and you still refuse to acknowledge yourself a true daughter of Abraham, then, O my God! enable me to act according to the spirit of thy holy laws, and be the first to bring to judgment the idolatrous member of my house, though my heart-strings break in the effort!"

Zadok hurried from the room, and shutting himself up in his private apartment, passed the night in prayer for the soul of his child. None of the family retired to rest, for Salome and Claudia would not leave Naomi, on whom they hoped their persuasions would have some effect, and incline her more readily to obey the wishes of her father. Amaziah also remained with his niece, to strengthen and support her, for her spirits sank after the violent effort she had made; and he also entertained a hope, that while he defended the cause of his niece, his arguments might have some good influence in weakening the prejudices of Salome and Claudia. Had Zadok been aware of the discussion that was carried on for several hours that night, he would have put a stop to it, nor have suffered his wife to listen to the doctrines and the narratives so eloquently set forth by his zealous brother. Salome's naturally mild and amiable disposition had always prevented her from manifesting the same hatred and contempt for the Nazarenes that was felt by her husband and her son. The malignant violence of Javan had ever inspired her with fear and horror; and even Zadok appeared to her to cherish sentiments at variance with true religion and charity. The character also of Jesus, of whom in her childhood she had heard innumerable stories of love

and mercy, had to a certain degree impressed her heart; and though she looked upon his assumption of Divinity as unfounded and blasphemous, and ascribed his miracles to the agency of evil spirits, according to the belief of all her mistaken people, yet she could not withhold her admiration from the holiness, and purity, and self-devotion of his life, and that of his followers and disciples.

The enthusiasm and determination of Amaziah and her daughter also greatly influenced her mind, and she respected a firmness which she felt herself incapable of sharing. She knew not then the all-powerful effect of the Christian faith in giving courage and boldness to the weakest believer; she knew not how the contemplation of the Redeemer's love could inspire such a corresponding feeling of gratitude and devotion, as to banish all weakness and all regard for personal suffering, and make death in its most terrible form less to be dreaded than one act of unfaithfulness to Him. Had Zadok been a Christian, Salome would have found no difficulty in receiving the same doctrines: but she looked up to him as a model of wisdom, and judgment, and piety; and when she heard him laugh to scorn the "wild delusions of the Nazarenes," she was convinced that he must have good reason for the contempt he expressed, and that it was the weakness of her own mind that inclined her to favour a system to which her husband was so averse. Had she looked simply to the word of God, and studied it attentively, with prayer for the guidance of his Spirit, and cast aside all human dependence, doubtless her mind would have been speedily enlightened, and she would have been spared much of the sorrow, and doubt, and anxiety by which she was eventually tried and afflicted.

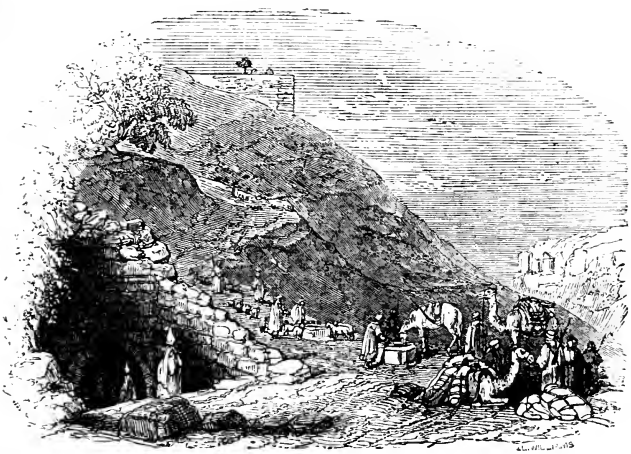
Claudia had not so many prejudices to overcome. She had been brought up in the belief of the existence of a multitude of deities, and it required no great effort

for her to admit the God of Israel to a share of her worship, when she was instructed by Naomi in the wonders he had performed, and the manifestations he had made of his power and goodness to his peculiar people. But her friend had found it much more difficult to persuade her that all the divinities to whom she had from her childhood been taught to pay adoration were but senseless images, helpless and powerless. Time and reflection, the perusal of the Scriptures, and the prayers of Naomi, had by degrees eradicated the errors of her youth; and the letter which she had received from her brother, declaring his renunciation of all the gods of the heathen, had gone far to convince her that they were unworthy of her worship. During the period of Naomi's absence from Jerusalem, her time had been passed in perfect retirement. The state of the city had made it necessary for females to remain as secluded as possible, and Salome and Deborah had both taken advantage of this season of comparative inactivity to improve the good impressions already made by Naomi's instructions.

At the period of which we are now speaking, Claudia was therefore in belief a Jew. Naomi had not ventured to confide to her the change which was worked in her own sentiments, for she feared that it might weaken Claudia's newly-acquired faith in the one true God of heaven and earth, if she knew that her young teacher paid divine worship to Jesus of Nazareth. Naomi waited until she could be satisfied that her pupil had a right understanding of the nature of Jehovah, as revealed by himself; and then she anticipated with delight the task of displaying to her mind the light of the Gospel, and showing her how the same God who reigns over the universe had manifested himself to the world in the person of his Son—and this for the salvation and redemption of guilty, fallen man!

The conversation of Amaziah on the night of her

return to her home, deprived her of the privilege of being the first to declare Jesus Christ to her friend as the Messiah, the Lord; but she saw with joy the evident impression that was made by her uncle's arguments both on her mother and Claudia, and earnestly she prayed that the good seed then sown, might, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, spring up and come to perfection, and bear good fruit; and that it might be her blessed privilege to help forward two beings so dear to her in the way of eternal salvation.



CHAPTER X.

We have mentioned that Galba had succeeded to the throne of the Roman empire, in the room of the tyrant Nero; and that Vespasian prudently abstained from taking any active measures in Judea, lest he should weaken his forces, but kept them together in readiness for any enterprise that might seem calculated to promote his ambitious views, and hasten the accomplishment of the prophecy that had been pronounced by his Jewish captive, Josephus. Had all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the neighbouring country improved this season of rest and respite from foreign war, their city might have been better prepared to receive the assaults of the Roman army when at length the siege was determined on; or, better still, they might, by a timely submission, have appeased the anger of the new emperor, whose attention was greatly occupied by the unsettled state of affairs in the regions nearer to the capital of the empire.

But no such salutary and prudent steps were taken by these misguided and rebellious people, who only turned the arms that were no longer exerted against a foreign enemy, with greater animosity against each other. Simon the son of Gioras, the bloody and vindictive Simon, added a third party to those which already distracted the metropolis. This scourge of his country might rival even John of Gischala in cruelty and ferocity, but he was not a match for him in cunning. He had been conspicuous in the rout of Cestius' army, which had occurred at the beginning of the war and

since that period he had carried on a course of pillage and violence. He had been expelled from Acrabatana by Ananus, and entering Masada, he had succeeded in making himself master of the town. His party had gradually augmented; and having traversed the region of Idumea with his fierce and victorious band, he at length turned his eyes towards Jerusalem, and began to entertain hopes that he might vanquish the two parties that already contended for the superiority within her walls, and himself become the leader and the chief of all.

When his approach was known in the city, a considerable body of the Zealots sallied forth to oppose him, but they could not stand against his forces, and were driven back again with discomfiture and loss. Simon did not, however, venture to attack the city immediately; but apprehensive of his own strength, he resolved on returning to subdue Idumea before he commenced that enterprise. He therefore placed himself at the head of twenty thousand men, and hastened back to the frontier. The Idumeans speedily assembled to the number of twenty-five thousand and leaving the rest of their forces to guard their families and possessions from the incursions of the robbers from Masada, they met Simon on the borders of their territory, where a long and doubtful contest was maintained the whole day. It is hard to say which party should be called the victors, for Simon retreated to the village of Nain, which he had previously fortified and put in a state of defence, and the Idumeans retired to their own country. But Simon shortly afterwards made another incursion upon them with a still more powerful army, and having pitched his camp before Tekoa, he dispatched one of his associates, named Eleazar, to persuade the garrison of the neighbouring fortress of Herodium to surrender to him. The garrison were so indignant at the proposition that they attacked Eleazar with their drawn swords, and he was

obliged to leap from the wall into the deep ditch that surrounded it, where he died on the spot.

The Idumeans dreaded the power and the vengeance of Simon, and they determined, if possible, to ascertain the strength of his army before they again met him in battle; and one of their princes, named Jacob, offered to accomplish this object. But he was a traitor, and only sought the opportunity of betraying his country into the hands of her enemy. He went from Colures, which was the head-quarters of the Idumeans, to the camp of Simon, and immediately made an agreement to assist him in reducing the whole country to his subjection, on condition that he himself should be well treated, and rewarded with riches and honours. To these terms Simon promised a ready compliance, and having regaled him with a grand entertainment, he dismissed him with extraordinary courtesy. Jacob was elated with the prospects which he saw before him; and on returning to his countrymen, he endeavoured to alarm them by a false account of the forces of Simon, describing them as much more numerous than they really were. He afterwards tried various arts and persuasions with the princes and the chief men, separately, to induce them to lay down their arms, and receive Simon as their governor; and while he was thus treacherously endeavouring to weaken the courage and corrupt the fidelity of his countrymen, he secretly sent to Simon, desiring him to commence the attack, and promising that he would disperse the Idumeans. To effect this, as soon as the enemy approached, he mounted his horse and pretended to take flight, followed by those whom he had already made his accomplices; and the rest of the army, being seized with a panic, left their ranks and fled away towards their homes.

Thus, almost without bloodshed, Simon entered the country, took the ancient city of Hebron, and wasted all the neighbourhood. Marching from thence, he ravaged

the whole land of Idumea, and carried off all the provisions and cattle of the wretched inhabitants. His army had increased to such a multitude from the number of irregular troops who followed him, that the country could not furnish necessaries for them; and the consequent distress of the peasantry, added to the cruelty of Simon, made them groan beneath the weight of their accumulated misfortunes. Simon's army carried desolation wherever they turned: they burned some places, and pulled down others; seized and destroyed whatever fell into their hands, and trampled under-foot every species of vegetation, so that the land became a desert, and appeared as if it had never been cultivated. These proceedings against their former allies added fury to the resentment of the Zealots, and yet they dared not meet the destroyer in open battle; but having placed ambuscades along the road, by which they were informed the wife of Simon was to pass, they succeeded in carrying her off a captive to Jerusalem, with several of her attendants. They hoped by these means to bring Simon to terms, for they knew that the loss of his wife would distract him; and therefore they expected that in order to obtain her release he would bind himself by an agreement that they might dictate. But the feelings of Simon were not to be acted upon in the manner which they anticipated: instead of approaching their walls a humble suppliant for the restoration of his wife, he came raging like a wounded beast of prey. All who ventured to set their foot outside the gates, to gather olives in the gardens or bring in other necessaries, were seized by his watchful emissaries, and brought to their savage master, who put them to death, without distinction of age or sex, after inflicting on them unparalleled torments. He is said to have been hardly restrained from tearing their flesh with his teeth, so ungovernable was his fury and vengeance. Some of his victims he spared from death only to inflict on them a worse punishment; for he cut off

both their hands, and in this mutilated condition sent them back into the city, with orders to tell the leaders, that Simon had sworn by the Almighty, that if they did not immediately restore his wife to him, he would break through their walls, and treat in the same barbarous manner all who were within the city, without any distinction. This dreadful threat alarmed the people, and even the Zealots. In hope of appeasing their furious enemy, they sent out his wife to him, on which he laid aside his intention of an immediate slaughter, and withdrew his army from the walls.

During the preparations for his departure, a party of his sentinels brought into the camp a young Jew, whom they had discovered lurking among the neighbouring hills, and apparently watching their motions with great anxiety. He fled at their approach, but they pursued and caught him, and now conducted him into the presence of Simon as a spy. The young man had a bold and crafty countenance; and his appearance bespoke that he had endured much hardship and fatigue; but he almost trembled at the fierce aspect of the son of Gioras, whose character was doubtless well known to him. Simon sternly demanded who he was, and what had brought him so near his camp; and believing that deceit could not, in this instance, be of any advantage to him, Javan (for it was him) replied:—

"I am the son of Zadok the priest, and have long been a captive in the hands of the Romans. With danger and difficulty I escaped from them, when they were encamped on the shores of the Dead Sea. For months I have wandered among the mountains and the deserts, seeking vainly to find an opportunity of returning to my native city, and rouse my countrymen to a fiercer opposition against my hated captors. The approach of Vespasian so near the walls of Jerusalem long deterred me from the attempt to gain entrance, as I dreaded falling into the hands of any of his skirmishing parties; and

though I burned to find myself upon the battlements of Zion, and to cast defiance at the infidels from her proud bulwarks, yet I was forced to loiter away my time in restless inactivity. When Vespasian withdrew his forces from the neighbourhood, I again approached my native district, but was again disappointed in my object, by finding that your valiant troops were contending with those ruffian Zealots. The succeeding war in Idumea prevented me from passing through that country, until you left it to seek vengeance for the insult offered to you by John of Gischala and his robber band. Then I entered Judea by a secret path through the mountains, and was anxiously watching for a moment of security, that I might present myself before the gates of the city and join her brave defenders, when I fell into the hands of your brave men."

Simon was satisfied that the prisoner was not deceiving him, and he replied,—

"Why then did you not boldly come to me, and join the ranks of my patriotic followers? You might have known that the welfare of Jerusalem is my only object; and that I seek to rid her of her present oppressors, that I may establish again the rules of order and good government, and restore the neglected worship of the temple to its former holiness and magnificence. My righteous efforts will doubtless be blessed with success, and the God of battles will put to rebuke those miscreants who now so audaciously trample on his holy sanctuary and despise his laws."

"Most noble Simon," replied the wily Javan, "your holy zeal finds an echo in my breast. Had I known the object of your enterprise, I should long ere this have hastened to enroll myself under your victorious banner, and have rejoiced to lend my aid to so meritonous a purpose. I am now ready to take an oath of fidelity to you and your cause; and, by the blessing of the Almighty, we shall soon triumph over the Zealots,

and restore the city of the Great King to prosperity and peace."

Thus spoke Javan, partly actuated by a politic regard to his own safety, and partly prompted by his fanatical zeal and pride. He hoped that Simon's party might gain the ascendancy, if they once obtained a footing in the city; and he knew enough of their leader to be convinced that he would forward to the utmost all his own schemes and projects, for what he called the honour of God—by which he meant, the oppression and destruction of all who differed from the proud, self-righteous sect to which he belonged. He believed that in so doing he should promote the cause of religion, and strengthen the party of those whom he considered as the only true children of Abraham. He therefore made up his mind to attach himself to Simon, and, if possible, to gain his confidence, and penetrate all his schemes. Should they succeed, he would enter Jerusalem as his follower; but if he failed in opening her gates, either by force or by subtlety, Javan depended on his own cunning to make his escape from his adopted leader, and unite himself to whichever party he should find the most congenial to his own bigoted feelings, when he had succeeded in obtaining an entrance into the city.

A compact was soon entered into between these two crafty men, who both affected to conceal their own cruel and ambitious views under the disguise of zeal for religion. In this profession Javan was more sincere than Simon; he had devoted a great part of his early life to the study of the sacred writings, and still more sacred traditions, so profoundly reverenced by his sect; and for the honour of these voluminous and erudite productions, and the observance of the wearisome regulations which they enjoined, he held it to be his duty to consecrate his time and his strength, and even to abandon every tie of natural affection that might interfere with the views which he entertained. But with the

son of Gioras, ambition and revenge were the darling objects; and religion was little more than a cloak, under which to exercise every violence and every cruelty that was dictated by his own evil heart. He once more resolved to defer his intended attack upon Jerusalem, and wait until the forces within the city had wasted yet more of their strength in civil contests; and also until he had further augmented his own army. He therefore retired again into Idumea, where for a considerable time he continued his former system of pillage and oppression.

The suspension of hostilities on the part of the Romans, and the departure of Simon, encouraged some of the Christians at Pella to forsake for a little time their place of refuge, and to return to Jerusalem, either to secure some of their effects which had been neglected at the time of their retreat, or to see again those members of their families who, though separated from them in faith and in hope, were yet united to them by the bonds of affection. Among those who thus visited the holy city at this time were Amaziah and Judith. They had come to the resolution of finally abandoning their devoted and rebellious country, and retiring to Ephesus with their son, who had hitherto remained in Jerusalem. They knew that they should there find a numerous and increasing church of Christians, and that the venerable apostle John then dwelt there, and watched over the spiritual welfare of his beloved brethren in Christ, with all the affection and all the zeal that glowed in his devoted heart. To enjoy the privilege of his presence and his instruction was one great motive that induced Amaziah and his wife to select Ephesus as the place of their retreat; and they also possessed friends and connexions among the believers established there. Before they undertook so long a journey, they wished to see and to bid farewell to their relations in Jerusalem; and they likewise intended to make an effort for the preservation

of their dear Naomi, by endeavouring to persuade her parents to allow her to accompany them, and remain under their protection, until Judea should again be restored to tranquillity. Such a result of the war they did not themselves anticipate; for they looked confidently for the fulfilment of the denunciations of wrath pronounced against their countrymen by the Lord Jesus; and they feared that if Naomi remained in the city, she would share the fate of its obstinate inhabitants. Oh how gladly would they have persuaded Zadok and Salome also to be the companions of their exile! But that they knew to be a fruitless wish, so long as they despised the name of the Redeemer, and disbelieved alike his threatenings and his promises.

They found their niece unshaken in her faith, and fully resolved to hold fast to the religion which she had so boldly professed, in spite of all the sorrow which that profession had brought upon her. It is true that the influence of her kind and affectionate mother had preserved her from any severe manifestations of her father's wrath; but all the domestic comfort and happiness which she had so long enjoyed was gone. Zadok no longer regarded her with affection and pride, and no longer delighted in conversing with her, and instructing her in all the learning for which he was himself so celebrated. As much as possible he avoided seeing her, and when they met, his countenance expressed such deep grief and such repressed anger, that Naomi shrunk from his presence, and in her own apartment shed many bitter tears of sorrow, but not of weakness or indecision. The severest trial she had to undergo was when at stated periods she was summoned to attend her father and rabbi Joazer, to whom the secret of her apostasy had been confided, and in whose learned arguments her parents placed their only hope of her restoration to the true faith.

Rabbi Joazer spared neither time nor pains to accom-

plish this desired object; but all his tedious harangues, and all his copious appeals to the rabbinical writings and the traditions of the elders, only served to show to Naomi more plainly the folly and absurdity of exalting these human inventions above the word of God, and made her feel more devotedly attached to the faith she had adopted, and which she knew to be verified by Scripture, and founded on divine revelation. With humility, and yet with firmness, she replied to the assertions of the rabbi; and quoted the words of the prophets to prove that Jesus was indeed the Christ. Joazer would not listen to her; he only overwhelmed and silenced her, by long and rapid quotations from the cumbrous volumes on which he rested his creed; and at length dismissed her with anger and impatience to her chamber again.

Claudia was her constant companion, and her greatest earthly solace. She sympathised in the afflictions of her friend, and listened with an interest that daily increased, to the detail of all that she had seen and heard at Pella, and all the affecting narratives that had at first attracted Naomi's own attention, and excited her own curiosity, and led to her own adoption of the faith of Christ. The heart of Claudia was touched, and it was evident that the work of the Spirit had commenced within her, though it advanced but slowly, and she did not, as it were, grasp and comprehend the doctrines that were presented to her, with the rapidity that had characterized Naomi's conversion. Her less energetic disposition was alarmed at the wonder and the novelty of the religion that was proposed to her belief; and though in the mythology which she had been taught in her childhood, there were many pretended instances of the heathen divinities dwelling with men upon the earth, yet the history of Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, was altogether so different from these idle tales, and the miracles which glorified his earthly life were so astonish-

ing and so awakening, that Claudia paused before she could give full credence to all that her friend related to her.

Salome had repeated to her husband the substance of the interesting discourse of Amaziah on the night of Naomi's return; and Zadok saw plainly that an impression had been made on her mind, which he was very anxious to obliterate. He therefore strictly enjoined her never to renew the conversation with his daughter, on the plea that it would only strengthen Naomi's unhappy belief if she was called on to defend it; but his real object was to preserve his wife from the contamination of her obnoxious doctrines. He also took every opportunity of repeating to Salome his strongest arguments against Christianity, and all the popular slanders that were circulated against its Founder, and his immediate followers. By these means he succeeded in silencing the voice of conviction that was beginning to make itself heard in her breast; and the seed of the Spirit lay dormant beneath the weight of ancient prejudice, and mistaken reverence for the opinion of her intelligent and upright husband.

Things were in this state when Amaziah and Judith returned to Jerusalem. The house in which they had formerly dwelt when resident in the city, had been pillaged and destroyed during the recent scenes of anarchy and confusion; but Amaziah was a man of wealth, and had secured sufficient property in gold and jewels to provide for the maintenance of himself and his family, besides allowing him to indulge in the benevolent pleasure of ministering largely to the support and comfort of his poorer brethren. Zadok, somewhat unwillingly, invited him to reside, during the short period that he intended to remain in Jerusalem, in a portion of his own spacious dwelling; but he never eat at the same table with his brother or his family, and he allowed as little intercourse as possible between the members of his own household and the Nazarene inmates of his house.

The comparative state of security to which Jerusalem and its vicinity were restored, by the inactivity of the Romans, also induced the aged Mary to return to her beloved home at Bethany, under the protection of Amaziah, who left her in her secluded dwelling, before he and his well-armed party descended the Mount of Olives and entered the city. Naomi could not rest when she found that her venerable friend was again at Bethany without seeking the first opportunity of going to visit her; and as she was allowed to walk out under the guardianship of the indulgent Deborah, she succeeded several times in inducing her to extend their rambles to the village, and permit her to rest awhile in Mary's cottage. The old nurse knew that Naomi was under the displeasure of her father, and as she was present on the evening when the disclosure of her sentiments took place, she was well aware of the cause of Zadok's anger, and therefore she could not imagine that his daughter's visits to the aged disciple of Jesus would be approved of by him. Nevertheless she could not deny her dear young mistress in anything, and by her means Naomi enjoyed much delightful conversation with her friend. Perhaps the young and ardent convert would have been more strictly in the path of duty if she had not thus acted in opposition to the wishes of her parents; but we are only describing a human character, liable to sins and errors, and not a model of perfection, such as the world has never seen *but once*. Naomi believed that she could not be wrong in seeking the society of her to whom she owed the knowledge of salvation, and endeavouring to obtain from her instructions fresh knowledge and fresh strength, to support her in any coming trials or sufferings. The increasing infirmities of her beloved teacher also acted as a strong stimulus to her to seize every opportunity of visiting her, not only that she might benefit by her discourse as much as possible, but also that she might cheer her solitude, and minister

to her wants, and, as far as lay in her power, render her latter days easy and comfortable.

Claudia always accompanied her friend on these expeditions; and the words of the venerable and evidently declining saint powerfully strengthened the impression which had already been made on her mind. The sacred peace and joy that shone in the countenance of Mary, riveted her attention and commanded her respect; while the kindness and benignity of her manner, her zeal for the spiritual welfare of her young pupils, and her tender indulgence for their faults and backslidings, won her warmest affection.

Judith and Amaziah also made frequent visits to the dwelling of Mary; and by their care, a poor Christian woman was discovered in the village, and engaged to attend upon her, and provide for her comfort. Hannah was a humble but most devoted disciple, and she joyfully undertook to watch the declining days of one so holy and so privileged as Mary of Bethany. Her own poverty had prevented her from retiring to Pella at the commencement of the war, and the entire seclusion in which she lived, had caused her to be overlooked by those who would willingly have assisted her; and she now rejoiced that she had been appointed to remain in danger and distress, since it was her lot at length to share the dwelling, and listen to the discourse, of her who had sat at the feet of Jesus, and heard from his own lips the words of grace and salvation.

One evening near the time of sunset, Naomi and Claudia were returning from their favourite walk to Bethany, attended only by the faithful Deborah, Theophilus, who was their frequent companion, being unable to join them. They crossed the rippling stream of Cedron, and entered the garden of Zadok, which extended from the margin of the brook to the road by which they always approached the city gate. The thick foliage of the overhanging trees cast a deep shade across the

garden path, and the young maidens were startled at observing the figure of a man lurking in one of the darkest spots. Claudia would have fled from the garden, and Deborah shrunk back, trembling more from a superstitious fear of meeting an apparition than from any apprehension of danger from a living man. But Naomi, with her usual presence of mind and undaunted spirit, drew them forward, whispering, "Fear not: if evil is intended it is useless to fly, for we must be overtaken; and if we boldly proceed, our confidence may deter the intruder from approaching us."

They advanced along the most open path, and Naomi continued talking to her companions in a cheerful tone of voice, when even her courage was almost put to flight by the stranger suddenly springing towards her through the bushes, and catching her in his arms. But what was her surprise and delight when she heard the voice of Javan exclaim,—

"It is my own dear sister Naomi! I thought I could not mistake your form and step—but your voice completely satisfied me. I have been lingering here for some hours; for I was anxious, if possible, to see some member of my father's household, and learn the present state of the city before I presented myself at the gate. But as I find you, Naomi, walking thus slenderly attended, I conclude that the civil war has somewhat subsided, and I may fearlessly enter the city under your escort."

Naomi most joyfully embraced her brother, for whom she had a sincere affection, notwithstanding the many annoyances and provocations which she had received for his violent temper. Indeed all these were forgotten and forgiven during his long absence; and she remembered but that Javan was her only brother, who had been in danger and in captivity, and had now returned to be her friend and companion, and the comfort, as she hoped, of her parents. She assured him that he could

safely enter the walls of Jerusalem, as the Zealots were almost constantly shut up in the temple, except when they sallied forth to insult or pillage the more peaceable inhabitants.

"But happily," she added, "the situation of our father's house, so near the water-gate, allows me to walk out constantly in this direction; and not only to enjoy the beauty and fragrance of our own garden, but to ramble unmolested among the olive-groves of yonder mount, and to visit the lovely village of Bethany."

Naomi sighed as she spoke of Bethany, for she feared that the return of her brother might put a stop to the happy and interesting hours which she passed there with Mary; for she knew that if he once suspected the object of her visits to the village, his anger would be ungovernable, and she dreaded his becoming acquainted with what he would call her impious apostasy. She could have wished that he might remain ignorant of it, but she felt that it was almost a hopeless wish, and she only prayed that she might be supported under the bitter addition of a brother's anger and a brother's scorn.

Claudia did not receive the salutations of Javan with unmixed pleasure. She feared for Naomi, and she feared for herself, and she felt a gloomy foreboding that his presence would only bring fresh trouble and discord. But Deborah was overpowered with delight at again beholding her beloved young master in freedom. All the waywardness of his disposition had not weakened her attachment to him, and he returned her affection with great sincerity. Javan was not devoid of good natural feelings, and when they were called forth he displayed a warmth of heart that would have made him amiable and beloved, if it had been united to the Christian graces of humility and charity. But pride and fanaticism were his predominant passions, and too often stifled or concealed all that was good and estimable in his character.

He loved his parents and he loved his sister. His father's learning and strict attention to the observances of religion and the customs of his sect, were with him a source of pride, and he could not but respect the deep piety and integrity of Zadok; while his mother's gentle and affectionate manner, and the tender admonitions which she had bestowed on him at parting, had made an impression on his heart that could not be obliterated. In the energy and determination of Naomi's character he found a counterpart of his own; and he admired her spirit, though it had been the frequent cause of dissensions between them in former days, while yet his sister's heart was unchanged, and the faults of her education were uncorrected by the mild spirit of Christianity. But all the more engaging points in her character were unshared by her brother, and found no sympathy from him when his love for her was opposed by his prejudices or his passions.

On reaching the threshold of their father's house, Naomi hastened forward to acquaint her mother of Javan's return, for she feared that the sudden joy of seeing him so unexpectedly might overpower her. She found Salome and Zadok, with their friend Rabbi Joazer, sitting on the terrace at the back of the house, from whence there was a fine view of the Mount of Olives and the surrounding country. The situation of Zadok's house was very elevated; and this terrace, which was a favourite resort of the family, entirely commanded the city walls to the east, and afforded a cool and pleasant retreat when the sun was sinking towards the western horizon, and casting the deep and broad shadows of the temple and the battlements across the fertile valley that lay below. A small but richly cultivated garden of flowers had been formed at the foot of the terrace, and the perfume of roses and jessamines, and other odorous plants, rose deliciously in the evening breeze. The moon had just risen above the summit of the Mount of

Olives, and though it yet appeared but as a brilliant crescent, yet in the pure atmosphere of that favoured land its mild beams were sufficient to shed a soft and lovely light on all around. Naomi paused involuntarily when she drew near the group who were seated in this enchanting spot. Zadok and Joazer were conversing so earnestly that her light step was unperceived, as the faces of the speakers were turned from her, and unintentionally she heard some words of their discourse.

"She is an obstinate apostate!" exclaimed the rabbi, with warmth. "She is unworthy of the name of Zadok's daughter! Let her be *anathema maranatha*."

"Oh! say not so," cried the trembling voice of Salome. "Curse not my child, most holy rabbi. If, as you say, she is possessed by the spirits of evil, let us rather pray for her."

Zadok was about to reply, when a sigh that burst from Naomi's burdened heart attracted the attention of her parents and the rabbi, and they turned towards her. It must have been a heart of stone that could look upon her at that moment, and not be touched by the expression of deep grief and patient resignation depicted in her pale countenance. Her hands were clasped, and her glistening eyes turned upwards, as if seeking from above that comfort and that protection which it seemed probable would soon be denied her on earth. Anxiety and sorrow naa already left their traces on her form and face, and quenched the brilliance of her clear black eye; but she was more lovely and more interesting in her patient grief than she had been in the pride of her joyous youth.

A tear rolled down Salome's cheek as she gazed upon her beloved, but, as she believed, her deluded and erring child; and Zadok turned away, and strove to conquer the love and the compassion that swelled within his breast. But the rabbi was unmoved. Years of laborious and unprofitable study had extinguished his social affec-

tions, and dried up the current of his natural feelings. In the firmness of the young Christian he saw nothing but the machinations of Satan, and in her touching sorrow he only recognised the wiles of the evil one to soften and deceive her parents.

"Away, thou child of the devil!" he exclaimed, "and seek not to move your too indulgent parents by this vain show of sorrow, while by your perverseness and impiety you are all the while breaking their hearts. Oh that you resembled your holy and zealous brother Javan! Then would you be a joy and a comfort to the house of the righteous Zadok, instead of bringing shame and dishonour on the descendant of Aaron, the saint of the Lord. But why do I waste my words on one so obdurate and so unworthy. Satan hath blinded thine eyes, and shut out the light of heaven; and but for your mother's false tenderness, you should be sent forth an outcast, as his portion."

To this passionate malediction the unhappy Naomi made no reply. She felt that it was but a portion of her appointed trial, and in her heart she repeated the meek words of the fugitive King of Israel—"Let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him." She turned towards her mother, and said in a faltering voice,

"I come only to announce my brother's safe return. He feared to startle you if he suddenly appeared. May he be a blessing to you. For myself, I can only expect his scorn and hatred when he hears that I have learned to honour the holy name which he despises. But be it so. My proud heart has need of all this to convince it of its own weakness and its own depravity."

Joazer had not waited for the conclusion of Naomi's sentence, but had hurried from the terrace to meet and to welcome his former pupil; and Salome seized the opportunity of his absence to entreat her husband to conceal from Javan, at least for a time, the apostasy of his sister.

"Doubtless," she urged, "our prayers and our arguments will, ere long, bring her back into the path of truth; and you know, Zadok, the violence of Javan's feelings with regard to the Nazarene faith. Before I go to meet my son, let me hear you promise to keep from him the knowledge of what would so deeply grieve him."

Zadok gave the promise which she required, for he hoped that Naomi might derive benefit from the conversation and the learning of her brother; and he knew that if Javan even suspected her of being a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth, he would hold it to be contamination to have any intercourse with her. Naomi rejoiced in this concession, for she dreaded her brother's wrath; and she determined that she would not confess to him her faith so long as duty and sincerity did not require it. She would gladly have retired to her own chamber, and related to Claudia all that had occurred, but she felt that her absence from the family circle on this occasion would excite the surprise and call forth the inquiries of her brother; she therefore endeavoured to subdue her emotion, and to assume a cheerful aspect, before Javan and the rabbi, joined by her father and mother, appeared on the terrace.

The greetings and the animated conversation that ensued, allowed her time to rally her spirits and regain her composure. Javan had much to tell of his perils at Jotapata, of his long and irksome captivity, and of his escape and subsequent adventures. And as the name of Marcellus was frequently mentioned in his narrative, and Javan also faithfully delivered the parting messages of their former friend to each member of the family, Naomi felt so deep an interest in the discourse as to forget for a time her own peculiar trials and sorrows. Claudia also was delighted at the news of her brother's safety and prosperity. It was a long time since he had been able to send her any intelligence; but in his last

letter he had informed him that their father was anxiously awaiting any favourable opportunity for recalling her from Jerusalem, and placing her in some secure retreat, before the Roman army should commence a serious attack upon the capital. She had therefore, since the departure of Simon and his army, been in constant expectation of receiving a summons from Rufus, and an intimation of the plan which he wished her to pursue in order to join him. She ardently desired again to see her father and brother; and yet she dreaded this summons, for her heart was linked to Jerusalem by many ties, and she regretted that she had not been born a Jewish maiden, that so her duty as well as her affections might lead her to share the dangers and remain to sympathise in the sorrows of her friends. She had prospects of happiness laid out before her, the particulars of which shall be detailed hereafter, but she feared that her father's consent might not be obtained for their accomplishment, and that he might demand from her a sacrifice that she felt she could hardly make.

When first she recognised Javan in the garden, she thought that he might have been employed by her father to escort her out of the city to meet him in some safe place; and she listened with mingled anxiety and fear, until she found from his conversation with Naomi that he had escaped as a fugitive from the Roman camp, and not come as an emissary from the centurion. And when she heard the story of his wanderings, and knew how long a period had elapsed since he left the camp, though relieved from the dread of being recalled from Jerusalem, she again felt anxious and surprised at her brother's long silence, and feared that his messengers must have been unfaithful, or that his letters had been intercepted by the way. While she was minutely interrogating Javan concerning her father and brother, Zadok drew the rabbi aside, and communicated to him his reasons for consenting to keep secret from the zealous young

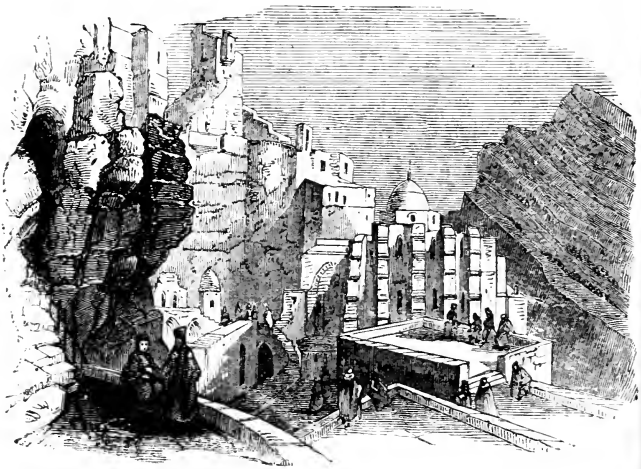
Pharisee the fact of his sister's conversion to Christianity and with some difficulty he obtained Joazer's concurrence to the plan. The fanatical rabbi burned to disclose the whole story of Naomi's crimes to her brother; for he fully anticipated that he should then have Javan's support and assistance in bringing about those harsh measures which he had vainly pressed upon her parents, as most likely to conduce to her restoration. It was therefore with a bad grace that he agreed to allow a further period for the trial of gentle treatment, and consented to meet and converse with the delinquent, in the presence of her brother, with the same freedom and cordiality that had marked his manner towards her in former days. These two learned but mistaken men then rejoined the party, and listened with considerable interest to Javan's account of the forces and discipline of the Roman army, and also to as much as he thought proper to disclose of Simon's projects. He had left his adopted leader in Idumea, and had entered Jerusalem as a spy upon the Zealot party. His design was to incline as many of the influential men as he could induce to listen to him, to invite Simon into the city, and make him their chief, in opposition to John of Gischala, and when he considered affairs in a proper state for the appearance of the son of Gioras at the gates of Jerusalem, he had promised to send him intelligence by a trusty messenger, or himself to go into Idumea, and summon him to be the deliverer of his country.

The greater part of these schemes Javan kept profoundly secret; and after he had lauded the courage and the zeal of Simon, and expatiated on his patriotism and his fitness to take the command of the Jewish forces, as successor to the captive Josephus, he turned the conversation to his own personal adventures and dangers, since he had escaped from the Roman camp. His sufferings and privations had frequently been very severe, as he was compelled to lurk among rocks and uninhabited

wildernesses for several days together, for fear of falling into the hands of his enemies. In the village of Bethezob, in Peræa, he had found a refuge for some time, at the dwelling of Mary, the daughter of Eleazar, who was a near relation of his mother's, and with whom he had become acquainted during her temporary residence in Jerusalem some years before. She was a woman of great wealth, and lived on the estates which she had inherited from her father, in a style of magnificence and luxury. Her attendants and domestics formed a numerous retinue; and her influence in the neighbourhood was so great, that when Placidus, shortly after Javan's visit to his relative, ravaged the district of Peræa, he deemed it prudent to leave the noble lady unmolested, in the hope that his moderation might induce her to favour the Roman party.

Javan informed his parents that he had endeavoured to persuade Mary to remove, with her only child and all her movable wealth, to the metropolis for security, before the Roman army should enter Peræa; but she had refused to do so at that time, as she felt convinced that with the comparatively small body of troops which Placidus had under his command, he would not attempt the subjugation of the province. Her conjectures had proved false, and the Roman general had not long afterwards carried his conquering arms through the whole region. Mary had however remained in safety on her own territory; and when, some time subsequent to his first visit, Javan had again found it necessary to retreat to Peræa, to avoid the wild bands who, under their leader Simon, were ravaging Idumea, he found her meadows and orchards as fertile and uninjured as when he saw them before the descent of Placidus. The lady of Bethezob had, however, been so much alarmed at the destruction which the Romans had effected in the surrounding country, that she told Javan she had resolved to abandon her estates and retire with her family into

Jerusalem, to await in the security of its walls and battlements, the termination of the war. Better had it been for the wealthy daughter of Eleazar to have remained near her native village, subject to all the chances and the dangers of an invading army, than to join the inhabitants of Zion, and share in all the sorrows and sufferings and revolting crimes to which the long-protracted siege at length drove this most desperate and enduring people!



CHAPTER XI.

The return of Javan to the home of his father put an end, in a great degree, to the freedom and independence that Naomi had hitherto enjoyed in directing her rambles according to her own inclination. Her brother constantly offered to be her companion and protector, when he was not engaged in carrying on his secret machinations in favour of Simon, and it was therefore but seldom that she could now find an opportunity of visiting her beloved old friend at Bethany. Occasionally, however, she enjoyed that satisfaction, accompanied by Claudia and escorted by her cousin Theophilus. Since her return to Jerusalem from Pella, she had become better acquainted with her cousin than she had been before. He was naturally extremely reserved in his manner, and the consciousness that on the important subject of religion he differed from the family of Zadok, had made him rather shun his relatives, when he was not called upon by duty or kindness to associate with them. It has been mentioned that during the time of Zadok's illness, when the Zealots carried on their wildest outrages, Theophilus remained in Jerusalem to be a comfort and protection to Salome and Claudia. To the former he had always been very much attached, for the gentleness and meekness of her disposition accorded with his ideas of what was becoming in a female character much more than the energetic spirit of her daughter; and he frequently lamented that she should remain ignorant of the religion of Him who was emi-

nenuy "meek and lowly of heart," and whose doctrines he felt sure would have found a suitable abode in her amiable and pious spirit. But "the Lord seeth not as man seeth," and judgeth not as man judgeth. The proud and self-confident Naomi became, by the teaching of His Spirit, a mild disciple of Christ—she whom Theophilus regarded as too high-minded and self-willed to receive the humbling doctrines of Christianity, had already embraced them with eagerness and sincerity; but her more gentle mother shunned and dreaded the same doctrines, and while appealing to the mercy of God, yet put confidence in the flesh, and—as she had been brought up to do—trusted in part to her own works for acceptance with Him.

For Claudia Theophilus conceived a much warmer affection. The candour of her disposition, and her openness to conviction when he conversed with her on the folly and iniquity of her former religion, won his esteem; and the intelligence and seriousness of her remarks made him hope that in due time her heart would be prepared for the reception of that faith to which he was a most zealous convert. He delighted to read and explain to her the writings of Moses and the prophets, and to point out to her, through the whole series of sacred Scripture, the promise of the great Messiah, the seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head. He did not altogether dwell on these glorious passages which depict his triumphant advent. He had learned to believe and adore him in his humiliation, and he showed to Claudia how the Saviour must be stricken and smitten, and bear the transgressions of men; and how he must be despised and rejected by those whom he came to save; and at last, how it was written of him that he should make "his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death," though "he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth."

By these means he opened her mind to the real cha-

racter of the Messiah, whose coming she still regarded as future, and prepared her to receive the lowly Jesus of Nazareth as "him of whom Moses and the prophets did speak." When Naomi returned home, Theophilus had not further enlightened his young pupil in the Christian faith. He was well satisfied with the progress she was making under his instruction and that of Salome and Deborah; but when at their next meeting she informed him of the confession which her friend had so boldly made, and with tears entreated him to try and convince her of her error, and thus restore her to her father's favour, he felt that he could no longer dissemble his own faith. Amaziah, in declaring himself and Judith to be Christians, had not mentioned his son; he had wished him to act as he saw best for himself; and Claudia had no idea that her preceptor was also a Nazarene, and that he had hitherto purposely withheld from her the knowledge of his being so. She was therefore not a little astonished at his declaration that he had been baptized into the church of Christ many years ago, and that the dearest wish of his heart was to see her as sincere a believer in the crucified Jesus as he was himself.

From that time Theophilus took every opportunity of conversing with Claudia on the subject most interesting to him; and Naomi rejoiced to find that her friend's prejudices against Christianity were gradually disappearing. She delighted to join in the animated discussions that frequently occurred between Claudia and her young teacher, and her own fervent enthusiasm inspired fresh zeal into the calm but devoted spirit of Theophilus. The same faith animated them both, and perfect confidence was soon established between the cousins, such as they had never felt in former days. Naomi was regarded by Theophilus as a sister; and the warmest efforts and the most heartfelt prayers were exerted by these Christian relatives for the advancement of Claudia's true happiness and eternal salvation.

When Amaziah and Judith became inmates in the house of Zadok, they saw with much concern the evident attachment that subsisted between their son and the young Roman maiden; for they knew not that the Spirit of the Lord was working in her heart, and bringing her out of heathen darkness into the glorious light of the Gospel. But when Theophilus informed them of the progress which the true religion had already made in dispelling the errors of her education, and bringing her to the knowledge of God, they rejoiced that he had bestowed his affections on one so amiable and so sensible as Claudia. The interest which they would naturally have felt in instructing so engaging and ingenuous a pupil, was greatly enhanced by the prospect of her becoming ere long their daughter; and they resolved that as soon as she was prepared to embrace the religion of Jesus, and to receive baptism, they would solicit her father's consent to her union with Theophilus, and removal with them to Ephesus.

Naomi sincerely rejoiced in her friend's happiness; but the idea that the time was drawing near when Amaziah and Judith were to depart from Jerusalem, and that then Claudia also would be removed far away from her, and she should be left without one Christian friend in whom she could confide, filled her with sorrow. While Mary of Bethany lived, she knew that she should not want either sympathy or counsel; but she saw that the aged saint was sinking gradually into the grave, and her own prospects were cheerless and gloomy as regarded the present world. Nevertheless all the persuasions and arguments of Claudia and her relatives were quite unavailing to induce her to accompany them in their exile. Her parents would have consented to her doing so, for Zadok saw how hopeless it was that she would ever return to the faith of her fathers; and he would not have opposed any plan by which the dishonour of her apostasy might have been kept from the knowledge

of the world. To Salome the loss of her daughter's society would have been irreparable and severe; and yet she almost entreated her to go. She believed that Naomi would thus be removed from many griefs and much anxiety; and she also dreaded the evil days that her heart foreboded were coming on Zion, and desired to know that her beloved child was placed beyond the reach of Judea's chastisement. Not even her mother's wishes could in this instance shake the resolution of Naomi: she could not believe that it was her duty to forsake her father and mother, so long as she was not absolutely prevented from exercising her own religion, and compelled to conform to anything which her conscience condemned. This was not the case, for Zadok was too wise to resort to such measures; and in the privacy of her own chamber she was permitted to pass her time according to the dictates of her own unalterable faith, and the customs which she had learned from her Christian brethren at Pella. No prospects of personal security and happiness could tempt her to leave her parents, more especially in a time of danger and anxiety; and her firmness on this point moved the heart of Zadok towards his daughter, and made him in some measure relax from the sternness of manner which he had assumed towards her ever since her return from Pella.

Javan knew not that his uncle and Judith were members of the sect which he so greatly despised. Their apostasy had been hitherto kept secret from him; and therefore if he had believed that heavy calamities were coming on the city of his pride, he would have urged his sister to remove for a time to Ephesus. But Javan dreamt only of his country's triumph, and admitted not one thought of her desolation. He looked forward with hope and confidence to the result of the war, and exulted in the prospect of meeting the Romans, hand to hand, before the walls of Jerusalem. Therefore he encouraged

Naomi to remain, and witness the glorious deliverance which the Lord would bring about for his own people; and though far from sharing his triumphant expectations, she was well pleased that he did not oppose her wishes, and her determination to share whatever peril should betide her parents.

The family of Zadok were thus circumstanced and thus influenced, when, on a calm and lovely evening, Theophilus, with his cousin and Claudia, crossed the brook of Kedron, and ascended the Mount of Olives. Theophilus led his companions a little out of the direct road to Bethany, that they might visit the garden of Gethsemane—that spot so sacred and so dear to every one who bears the name of Him, who beneath those aged trees wept and agonized for them! Tradition had preserved the situation of the very spot on which the Saviour knelt; and in deep emotion the three young converts now stood round the consecrated spot, while Theophilus fervently prayed that they all might be partakers in the redemption purchased by the mysterious sufferings of the Son of God. Naomi had not visited that garden since she had been taught to feel so deep an interest in the Divine Being, whose presence had so frequently hallowed it, and who loved to retire to the calmness of its peaceful shades, after the toils and trials of the day were over. There had he conversed with his highly-favoured disciples, and there had he passed hours in prayer for them, and for all who should in after ages believe on Him through their word. How precious was the remembrance of those prayers to the heart of Naomi She had already met with difficulties and temptations in her Christian course, and she had reason to anticipate still further trials and sufferings; yet she knew that she might apply to herself the words of her Lord to Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not;" and trusting to his intercession, she believed that strength would be given her to take up the

cross, and follow the Lamb whithersoever he should lead her.

Her reflections therefore on her future prospects were serious, but not desponding; and they occupied her mind during the remainder of the walk to Bethany so entirely that she took no part in the conversation of Theophilus and Claudia. Their discourse naturally turned from Gethsemane to the succeeding events in the sorrowful life of the Redeemer; and when they reached the dwelling of Mary, the interesting subject was unfinished.

"Mary," said Claudia, as she seated herself by the couch on which the aged disciple rested, "we have been to the garden of Olives, where you used to say you would lead me and Naomi, and tell us of the latter days of Jesus of Nazareth. I fear your feeble limbs will never again carry you to the holy spot; but will you not relate to us now what you remember of the Redeemer's last visits to this house, and all the sad events that closed his life?"

"My child," replied Mary, "it is now my happiness and my support to dwell on those days; though when they were present, I believed that the misery and woe which I endured would have broken my heart. My soul, now that it is about to quit this earthly scene and appear before its Maker, rests wholly on those sufferings of my Lord and Saviour for the expiation of the sins that crowd on my memory, and would press so heavily and so hopelessly on my conscience, had he not borne their weight and endured their punishment. Not one word or look of my blessed Master has escaped my memory. Oh, his countenance was light, and his voice brought peace and joy to all who loved him as I loved him! And yet I lived to hear that voice lifted up in anguish, and to see that heavenly countenance grow cold in death! It is to that last awful period that my own soul clings; but I will tell you of the days of anxious grief that went

before. It was on the evening of the last sabbath before the Passover that Jesus came to dwell beneath our roof. We did not know all that should befall him ere the close of that great festival; but we saw that his disciples were filled with grief and anxiety, and we heard from them of the sad announcement which he had made of his approaching sufferings; and our hearts were heavy. The Lord graciously accepted the invitation of one of his disciples named Simon, who dwelt in Bethany, to sup in his house, and it was the happy privilege of my sister and myself to wait upon him."

"And it was on that occasion, dear mother," interrupted Naomi, "that Judith has told me you anointed the feet of the Lord, and wiped them with your hair, and that he so kindly received that mark of devotion, and so remarkably commended it."

"Yes, my dear Naomi, it did please the gracious Redeemer to manifest his approbation of so slight and unworthy a service, to teach his followers, in all ages, that he will accept the humblest offering of the meanest disciple, if brought to him in love and gratitude. He who so soon afterwards threw aside the cloak of hypocrisy, and was known as the traitor, reproved me for thus expending what might have been sold for a large sum, and given to the poor; but the Lord silenced him, and gave this melancholy sanction to what I had done: 'She is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.' Then we knew that all our worst fears were well founded, and that our beloved Master was indeed about to leave us; and then did every moment of his presence become, if possible, doubly precious to us all. The following day he remained with us here; and the report having reached the city that he was abiding at Bethany, multitudes of Jews came out to see him, and also to behold our brother who had been dead, and was alive again. The approach of the Passover had necessarily brought great numbers of Jews from distant places to

keep the feast; and many of these had never seen Jesus, though his fame was spread abroad over all the land, and they had heard of the miracles which he had wrought, and were eager to be convinced of the truth of the resurrection of Lazarus. How rejoiced were we that our beloved brother should thus become a convincing proof of the divinity of our Lord and Master! And the time of his departure being now so near, he no longer refused to be publicly acknowledged. The hour was coming in which the Son of Man should be glorified; and the next day he sent two of his disciples before him to Jerusalem, to bring him the ass on which the prophet had foretold that he, the King of Zion, should enter the city. Seated on that lowly animal, and surrounded by all the inhabitants of Bethany, he descended the Mount of Olives. A vast concourse of persons from Jerusalem met him as he proceeded, and while they waved aloft the palm-branches which they had gathered, and cast their garments on the road before him, they raised the exulting cry, 'Hosanna! blessed is the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord!' O my children, that was a glorious sight! In the triumphant feelings of that moment we forgot the anxiety and fear that had so heavily oppressed our hearts. But when we turned to look on Him who was the object of all this enthusiastic feeling, we saw that he took no part in the general rejoicing. His eyes were fixed in sorrow and pity on the magnificent city towards which he was approaching, and the measure of whose guilt he knew would so soon be filled up. The shouts of the countless multitude were hushed, for the King of Zion opened his lips to speak; and while tears of compassion flowed from his eyes, he uttered that awful prediction, which doubtless will ere long be terribly fulfilled. Never can those words be forgotten:—'If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For

the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.' My dear young friends," continued Mary, in a voice trembling with emotion, "I shall not live to see those evil days, for I feel that my departure is near at hand; but you may expect to behold the vengeance of the Lord executed on the rebellious city, which has been blessed and favoured above all other cities on the earth. May you all be preserved from sharing her punishment, as, by the mercy of your Redeemer, your souls have been snatched from her guilt! Naomi, my beloved child in the Lord, I know your determination to abide with your parents; and I believe that you are acting according to the will of God. Therefore, come what may, I know that you are safe in his hands; and that whether in sorrow or in joy, in life or in death, his eye shall watch over you, and his hand shall guide you, until at last he shall bring you to those heavenly joys for which your ransomed spirit pants already."

Mary paused awhile, for her feelings were unchilled by age, and they were too powerful for her strength. Theophilus begged her to converse no more at that time, and promised that he would on the following evening bring his young companions again, to hear the remainder of her interesting recital; but she assured him that it was her greatest delight to discourse with them of those events which were so indelibly impressed on her own heart.

"How," she added, "can I better spend the small remains of time and strength which I still receive from his mercy, than by telling of all that he has done and suffered for my soul, and for the souls of those who hear me; yea, even for the souls of the thoughtless and

guilty multitude, who refused to listen to the things that belonged to their peace, and who so soon exchanged the hosannas and blessings with which they hailed his entrance into their city, for menaces and cries of 'Crucify him, crucify him!' Doubtless had the children of Zion by faith beheld their King; had they repented in sackcloth and ashes, like the inhabitants of Nineveh at the preaching of Jonah, and wept and prayed unto the Lord, even then the judgment might have been reversed, and mercy have triumphed. But they hardened their hearts, they killed the Holy One and the Just, and the city which saw his death must see his vengeance. The day on which our Master made his public entrance into Jerusalem, he passed much time in the temple, preaching and teaching the people; and when eventide was come, he again returned to our dwelling, accompanied by his twelve apostles.

"Again on the following morning he repaired to the temple, and to the astonishment of the priests and elders, he drove out all those who were profaning his Father's house by buying and selling within the sacred courts. They were filled with indignation at his boldness, and at the applauses of the multitude; and these ministers, appointed for God's service, who should have led the people to the feet of Jesus, to listen to his words, took counsel how they might slay him, because many believed on him. But as yet they feared to take him, for they saw that the multitude who constantly surrounded him would rise up in his defence; and that night also he returned unmolested to Bethany. It was not till the following evening that the traitor Judas went to the chief priests, and offered to deliver up his master into their hands; and the next day was the Passover. The treachery of Judas, and the determination of the chief priests to put him to death, must have been well known to the Lord; yet he openly went again to the city, and eat the Passover with his twelve disciples, not even ex-

cluding him who had already betrayed him. Then did he institute that holy feast, which it is the happiness and privilege of his disciples, *in every age and every land*, to celebrate in remembrance of him. You, Theophilus and Naomi, have already been permitted to partake of this memorial of your Saviour's dying love, and our dear Claudia will soon enjoy the same privilege. May it ever be your highest joy thus to declare yourselves his disciples; and may you so eat his flesh and drink his blood that you may be partakers in the salvation which by his death he purchased for you. When our beloved Master left Bethany on the day of the Passover, we little thought of the circumstances under which we should next behold him, and that he would never again return to our house before his death. But that very night the treacherous schemes of Judas were accomplished. I have often repeated to you already, what I afterwards heard from the blessed disciple John, of the gracious and affecting discourse which he addressed to his chosen followers before he left the room in which he had eaten his last supper; and how, having sung a hymn with them, he repaired to the garden which you have visited to-day, and passed hours in deep and mysterious agony, such as we cannot comprehend. There, to a retired and favourite spot, where Judas had often followed his Master, he now led the soldiers who were commissioned to take him. No admiring multitude now stood round him, to prevent the deed of sacrilege. The darkness of night shrouded alike the divine sufferer and his malignant enemies. The powers of evil were abroad, and were permitted in that hour to bring to pass what had been decreed in the everlasting counsels of Jehovah. Even the chosen disciples, the lion-hearted Peter and the devoted John, were sunk in sleep, worn out with sorrow and anxiety, and watched not with their sorrowing Lord, until he roused them to meet the approaching foe. Oh! my heart burns when I think of the insult

which he then received from Judas. The traitor met him with a kiss! And the Lord of heaven and earth, who could have called down legions of angels to his defence, submitted to the salutation, and suffered himself to be bound and led away unresistingly, as a lamb to the slaughter. The rumour that he was taken prisoner by the chief priests reached us at Bethany before break of day; and in anguish not to be told, we hastened to the city. We found that he had been led to Ananius first, and at the entrance of his court we waited in trembling anxiety, until we beheld him brought forth, not, as we hoped, to freedom, but only to be dragged from thence to the palace of Caiaphas. John was permitted to follow his Master into the palace, and my heart went with him, but we were not allowed to enter. Soon the beloved disciple returned and took in Peter also; but it had been well for him if he had not been admitted. You all know how Satan overcame him, and how grievously he fell. That fall has been a warning to us all; and may we be instructed by it! But we will not dwell on the errors of that distinguished and now glorified disciple. They were pardoned by his benign Master, and are only recorded for our instruction."

"Was John standing by him when he uttered his denial?" asked Claudia. "I think the affectionate heart of the disciple whom Jesus loved must have been deeply wounded to hear such words from the mouth of his companion."

"John had followed the Lord Jesus into the presence of the high-priest, and did not therefore witness the cowardice of Peter. But he who knew even the thoughts of their hearts, heard his name denied three times; and it must have added to the sorrows that already weighed so heavily on his soul. But pity was all he felt; and he turned on Peter such a look as reached him in the distant crowd, and told him at once of the grief and the forgiveness of his Master. His repentance was instant

and sincere, and with bitter tears he mourned his guilt"

"Did you see Jesus again, Mary?" inquired Claudia "I know that he was at length condemned by our Roman governor; but where did that take place?"

"Oh! my child, they led him from court to court, and from one judge to another. They insulted and scourged him; they clothed him in robes of mockery; and we saw him thus brought forth to the people by Pilate, and heard him loudly proclaim that he found no fault in him. Then we believed that he would be set free, and that his humiliation was over. But Pilate's declaration of his innocence was received with deafening cries of 'Crucify him, crucify him!' The chief priests moved the people to demand his death, and their voices prevailed over Pilate's own conviction that he had done no evil. A murderer was released, according to the custom of the governor to set one prisoner at liberty on that day, and Jesus was led away to be crucified. Tearless, and almost stupified, my sister and I followed in the crowd. We could not believe that what we had seen and heard was true; but soon we beheld our own adored Master bending beneath the weight of the cross on which he was to suffer. I cannot dwell on what followed. You have all heard the particulars of that dread hour, and all have learned to cast your souls at the foot of that cross, and seek salvation there. Martha and I stood afar off; we could not leave the spot, nor could we bring ourselves to approach nearer to the scene of suffering. But the mother of the Lord stood by, attended by three of her faithful friends, and the beloved disciple supported her. She who had watched over his infancy, and noted in her heart every manifestation of his divine nature—she who had ever received from him the affection of a son, now stood beneath his cross, and saw his dying agonies. Not even the horrors of that hour could make him forget his mother; he looked down and blessed her

and with his dying breath committed her to the care of John."

"And he well discharged the trust," observed Theophilus. "My father has often told me of his devoted attention to her while she lived. He was indeed a son to her; and nothing which could soothe her spirit or promote her comfort was neglected by John. With what impatient delight do I look forward to seeing that blessed man at Ephesus! He will repeat to me again and again all that you have told me so often, Mary; and by God's help I shall learn from him yet more and more to love my risen Lord. Oh, if I had lived while Jesus was on earth, I feel as if my love for him would have emulated that of John! He is indeed blessed beyond all the other sons of men; for he is that disciple who was eminently beloved. He was privileged to hold such intimate communion with him as we can never know."

"True, my son," replied Mary, "the Lord will return no more to earth as a man of sorrows, and deign to accept the sympathy and the humble services of his disciples. But your eyes, Theophilus, shall wake to see him come in glory; and if your faith and love hold on steadfast unto the end, you shall meet him as a friend, and enjoy such proofs of his favour as shall far surpass all that were ever bestowed even on John."

"But tell me," interrupted Claudia, "what did you see and hear of the fearful prodigies that attended the death of Messiah? I love to hear the recital from you, who were an eye-witness of all the awful events which declared him to be indeed the Son of God. My father once mentioned with contempt the centurion, who at that moment confessed his divinity; but he knew not the truth of all that then occurred to force conviction on the heart of the Roman soldier. It is my warmest prayer that one day I may hear him also exclaim, 'Truly this was the Son of God!'"

"May the Lord grant it!" replied Mary. "No soul

that was not blinded by the devices of Satan could have witnessed what that centurion saw and not have believed. An awful darkness had covered the land for three hours, and then, when all had been accomplished—when pardon had been pronounced on the expiring thief—when an asylum had been provided for his heart-broken mother —and when everything had been fulfilled, even to the letter, that had been prophesied concerning him—the Lord proclaimed in a loud voice, 'It is finished!' Heaven and earth heard the cry, and man's redemption was complete. Then he said, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;'—and bowing his head in death, his divine spirit left the house of clay in which it had so long sojourned and suffered. Then did the powers of nature give evidence to the awful importance of the work that was finished. The earth quaked to its foundations, the rocks were rent asunder, and the graves burst open. And more ominous still, the veil of the temple was rent asunder, and the priests who were waiting there rushed forth in terror, to declare the wonderful event. The hearts of the multitude, who had come together as to a spectacle, were stricken with awe. They smote their breasts, and returned in wonder to their homes. But we who knew and loved him best, yet tarried to watch his corpse. We knew that all life was fled, for we had seen his body pierced by the spear of one of the soldiers; but we could not leave his sacred form to be the object of their insults. We had not power or influence sufficient to obtain permission to bury it; but Joseph of Arimathea, who believed in him, and feared not to acknowledge his faith, even at that time of danger and distrust, went boldly to the Roman governor, and having requested the body of Jesus, it was delivered to him for interment. It was the weakness of our faith which led us to be so anxious about the burying of our Lord's body; for had we believed all that he himself had said concerning his rising again the

third day, we should have known that all our cares and precautions for its preservation was needless. But as yet we knew not the Scriptures nor the power of God and when the Lord was laid in the sepulchre of Joseph, we saw a great stone laid against the door, and departed with the melancholy satisfaction of knowing that all due respect had been paid to his honoured remains."

"But how wonderfully," observed Naomi, "was this very circumstance made to show forth the truth of God's word! The Jews even now say that his disciples came by night and took him away; and such is my father's reply, when I speak of his miraculous resurrection. But he cannot deny the security of the sepulchre. He acknowledges that the stone was sealed, and a watch was set by the chief priests. Surely then their own precautions prove the falsity of what they say."

"Yes, my child," continued Mary, "the malice of these wicked men was overruled by God, to accomplish what he had desired; and their jealous prudence was the means of proving that he did not suffer his Holy One to see corruption. While we, his weak and sorrowing disciples, were mourning his death with bitter tears, and hiding our grief in solitude, for fear of the vengeance of the priests, the Lord was preparing for us such joy and triumph as our desponding hearts could not conceive. What words can tell the feelings which overpowered us when first we heard the glorious news, 'He is risen!' And oh! when at length we saw him, when our eyes were blessed with the sight of his heavenly countenance, and we heard again that voice of mercy and of love, truly could we then have taken up the words of the aged Simeon, and said, 'Lord, now are we ready to depart in peace, for our eyes have seen thy salvation!' We knew that our redemption was accomplished and accepted; we knew that henceforth whosoever believed in Jesus should inherit eternal life. All

our doubts and fears were gone, and peace and joy for ever established in our souls. The Lord did not tarry long with us, but ascended to his Father. There does he watch over his church, and sympathise in all the trials and temptations of his children; and there do they join him and behold his glory, as one by one the hand of death comes to set them free from this earthly tabernacle, and open to them an entrance into the mansions of everlasting bliss. Oh! my dear children, my spirit longs to take its flight, and soon, I feel, will the summons come."

Mary closed her eyes and sank back on her couch, greatly exhausted by the effort she had made. She had hoped that the account of all that she herself had heard and seen might make a deep impression on the heart of Claudia, and she was not disappointed; but her strength was almost unequal to the exertion of so long a discourse on subjects so profoundly interesting to her, and for a few minutes she lay silent and motionless, while in her spirit she fervently prayed. Her young friends and her faithful attendant Hannah, who had listened to the conversation with deep attention, stood round her in silence, until she had somewhat recovered her strength, when she raised herself, and again addressed them, but in a weak and faltering voice—

"The evening is closing in, my children, and you have already tarried too long with me. I will detain you no more: but if we meet again in this world, I will tell you yet many things that will touch your hearts with love to your Redeemer, and furnish you with blessed subjects for reflection when youth and health are gone, and you are, like me, laid on the bed of death. Let me bless you before you depart."

The three young disciples knelt beside the couch of the dying saint, and with tears received her blessing. They then rose, and embracing her affectionately, left

the house and hastened towards the city. The sun was sinking behind the hill of Zion as they began to descend the Mount of Olives, and the short twilight had faded away before they reached the valley of Kedron, and entered the gardens that bordered the murmuring brook. Their spirits were oppressed with awe and sadness, for the solemn interest of Mary's discourse had deeply impressed them, and her parting address had filled them with sorrow. They felt assured that their beloved friend was leaving them; and though it would be to her a transition from a world of care to a world of joy unutterable and full of glory, yet they could not think of losing her without emotion. They proceeded almost in silence, until, as they were passing by the verge of a thick grove of olive-trees, Claudia pressed the arm of Theophilus, and hastily whispered:

"Listen, Theophilus: some one is surely watching us. I have heard footsteps behind us several times; but I saw nothing, and I feared you would chide me for cowardice if I spoke my fears. But now I am sure we are followed. I saw the figure of a man folded in a dark garment pass stealthily beneath those trees."

"Why should you fear, my Claudia?" replied Theophilus. "No one can harm us here. See, the gates are in sight, and I can perceive the dim forms of the watchmen moving slowly along the walls. We are within reach of help, and I am armed, so do not tremble"

"I do not fear for myself, Theophilus, but for you and Naomi. If Javan knew of our visits to Bethany—if Javan knew that his sister and his cousin were disciples of Jesus—oh, I believe no ties of blood would prevent him from denouncing you to the tyrants who make religion a mask for cruelty and murder."

"Silence, dear Claudia," said Naomi in a low whisper; "your eagerness makes you forget that you are perhaps within hearing of the person whom you think you saw lurking so near. Let us proceed quickly. I cannot

share your fears, but I dread my father's inquiries as to the cause of our long absence."

A short time sufficed to bring them to the threshold of Zadok's house, where Deborah met them with a countenance of alarm and anxiety.

"Why are you so late, my children?" she exclaimed. "I have been watching from the housetop in great uneasiness, until it became so dark that I could no longer distinguish the road up the Mount of Olives. Javan came in soon after you left the house, and asked eagerly in what direction you had walked out. My fears told me that you were gone to Bethany; but I concealed my suspicions, and tried to persuade your brother that you were gone by Solomon's pool, towards the valley of Hinnom. He looked stern and angry, and without replying hurried from the house."

"Then," cried Claudia, "my fears were not unfounded, and it was Javan himself who followed us. Something in the figure of the person I saw reminded me of him; and yet I tried to believe it could not be. Gracious Heaven! preserve us from his vengeance!"

Both Theophilus and Naomi were greatly alarmed at what Deborah had communicated, for they had lately heard Javan express himself with so much bitter hatred towards the Nazarenes that they felt convinced he would use all his influence for the persecution and destruction of any who bore the name; and they feared that even those who were of his near kindred would be sacrificed to his zeal and fanaticism. Claudia entreated Theophilus to leave them instantly, that Javan might not return and find them together; and also that he might repair to his father's apartments and inform him of what had occurred. He complied with her wishes, and was passing across the vestibule, towards the gallery that led to the suite of rooms occupied exclusively by his parents, when Javan entered, and in a voice of assumed kindness called to him to return.

"Come, Theophilus," he said, "I have seen but little of you lately, my time has been so much engaged. I have to thank you for so well supplying my place, and giving a brother's protection to Naomi in her evening rambles. Let us go altogether to the terrace, and join my father and mother, and you can entertain us with an account of your lengthened excursion, for you have been absent so long that you must doubtless have wandered far beyond the pool of Solomon."

There was an ill-suppressed tone of irony in what Javan said, that was but too well understood by those to whom it was addressed. Claudia turned deadly pale, and even Naomi felt that she had need of all her resolution to enable her to follow her brother. Theophilus calmly turned, and with an air of perfect composure joined his cousin, saying,—

"Yes, I believe an account of what we have heard and seen this evening will interest you all; and I claim to narrate it myself. Naomi and Claudia, you are not to interrupt me."

He accompanied this injunction with a warning look, which told the two maidens that he had some plan which he feared they might impede. The terrace they found unoccupied, and Javan left his companions there while he sought his parents. Theophilus immediately seized the opportunity to inform Naomi and Claudia that he plainly saw that Javan had discovered the object of their walk, and that his suspicions were excited.

"But," he added, "I believe I can baffle his inquiries, and ensure your safety, provided you both promise to be silent, and leave the explanation to me. You know that I will say nothing but what is true and right."

"Oh yes," said Claudia, "I will leave it all to you; and though Naomi does love to speak for herself, she must agree to do the same. I never wish, for my own part, to have anything to say to your fierce cousin."

"Claudia," replied Naomi, "you think too ill of my brother. His temper is warm, and his zeal sometimes makes him appear vindictive; but he has an affectionate heart; and to me he has shown much kindness since his return. Let us not anticipate evil, for perhaps we are even mistaken in supposing that he suspects our visits to Bethany, or at all events that he is aware of their object. I will get my harp, and sing to him some of his favourite hymns. In former days I could always drive away the evil spirit from his soul by my music, and now I hope it has not lost its charm. Do not say anything rash, Theophilus, and I will promise not to interfere with your schemes."

Naomi spoke more cheerfully than she felt, for she saw that Claudia was trembling with apprehension, and that Theophilus had evidently resolved on some measure of importance,

CHAPTER XII.

At this moment Javan returned, and with an air of gaiety that ill accorded with the dark feelings of his heart, summoned his young companions to follow him.

"My mother," he said, "awaits you in the cedar hall, where supper is prepared. Rabbi Joazer is with her, but my father is not yet come in. We will have a merry banquet to-night. Come, you do not seem in a festal mood, Theophilus. This evening walk has wearied you, and chased away your spirits."

"Shall I not sing to you, my brother?" interrupted Naomi, who was fearful that her cousin might reply hastily to Javan's taunt: "my harp used to beguile you of many an hour in former times; but you have hardly heard its tone since you came back to us."

"Yes, child, bring your harp: it will serve to amuse our ears until my father returns."

Naomi obeyed, for she felt that music would be better than conversation in Javan's present mood. She took up her harp from the pedestal on which it lay in the anteroom, and entered the apartment where her mother sat, working at her embroidery by the light of a richly-chased silver lamp. Deborah had joined her after she had met Naomi and her companions at the entrance, and was now occupied in the same manner as her mistress, assisted also by two of Salome's maidens. The rabbi reclined on one of the couches which were placed around the supper-table, according to the Jewish manner of sitting at their meals; and the whole arrange-

ment of the apartment bespoke cheerfulness and comfort. The hearts of several of its inmates responded not to the bright scene around them. Naomi approached her mother, and affectionately saluted her, whispering at the same time,—

"Javan looks unhappy and oppressed with care. Do not notice it, dear mother, but I will sing his gloom away."

So saying, she seated herself on a cushion at Salome's feet, and striking a few chords on her harp, sang in her wildest, sweetest tones, her brother's favourite song; which she herself had composed when first the Roman army threatened the safety of Zion:

"Sing to the Lord! Oh sing His praise!
Sons of Israel, loudly raise
Your voices to the King of kings—
Listen how all nature sings!
The golden spheres that roll above—
The air that breathes around—
And all created things that move,
Declare the great Jehovah's love,
To earth's remotest bound.
Angels, who dwell on high,
In realms beyond the sky,
Strike your immortal harps of gold,
And sing how Israel's God, of old
Displayed His power.
Now may His banner be again unfurled;
And shouts of triumph tell from land to land,
That God on high hath raised His mighty hand,
And, from their boasted height of glory, hurled
Our foes in this dark hour!"

"It is long since I have heard that song, my Naomi," said her mother. "It once was the hymn you loved best to sing: but latterly you have preferred more sorrowful strains."

"My spirit has lost that joyous feeling of confidence in the triumph of my country, that animated it when I first sang that song, dear mother. But Javan used to take delight in it; and I have tried to recall it now."

Naomi looked at her brother, hoping for a kind reply; but the forced smile had left his features, and their naturally stern expression had returned. He sat with folded arms, and his eyes cast down; while the compression of his lips and contraction of his brow betokened a fixed and a painful resolution. Probably he knew not that his sister had selected his favourite hymn to please him; though he was glad that the sound of her sweet voice gave him an excuse for continuing his moody silence.

The entrance of his father aroused him from his reverie, and the family assembled to partake of the evening meal. The ablutions prescribed by Jewish superstition were duly performed; and with this form Theophilus and Naomi always complied, as it was perfectly immaterial, and in no way opposed their private feelings. Javan watched his cousin during the performance of this simple ceremony with a look of scorn. He seemed to feel that Theophilus was committing profanation by sharing in the act; and lest he himself should contract defilement from sitting at meat with an apostate, he declined joining his family at supper, on the plea of indisposition, and remained silent and abstracted until the repast was finished, and the servants had retired. Then he turned to Theophilus and said,

"You promised us an interesting account of your walk this evening. I particularly wish to know in what direction you went, and whither you led my sister and Claudia. I would have joined you, but when I returned home, I found that you had left the house more than an hour before."

The imperious and contemptuous tone of Javan's voice struck all the party, and they saw that he suspected something wrong; while Claudia's changing countenance and evident agitation betrayed that there was some ground for his suspicions. Naomi had made up her mind to what would probably follow; and after

all she had already undergone, she felt that her brother's hatred and scorn would be an additional sorrow sent to loosen her affections from this world. Theophilus was perfectly unmoved, and replied at once :—

" I perceive, Javan, that you have other reasons for your inquiries than mere curiosity as to the direction of our walk ; therefore the most manly and ingenuous course will be at once to tell you, what I am convinced you already suspect, that I have this evening been to visit a poor Christian friend ; and that the interest I take in her is not merely because she is aged and infirm, and on her deathbed, but because she is a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ."

" Hear him, O righteous Zadok!" exclaimed the rabbi, starting from his seat, with uplifted hands. " The demon of heresy has again found his way into your family."

" Silence, Joazer," replied Zadok, who feared that in his zeal the rabbi would forget that Javan was ignorant of his sister's apostasy, and would inadvertently allude to it. " Silence, my friend, and suffer Theophilus to explain himself more fully before we condemn him."

" Yes, I will explain everything," continued Theophilus calmly. " I am neither ashamed nor afraid to declare that I hold the same faith with my dying friend, and, like her, address my prayers to Jesus of Nazareth."

" I knew it," said Javan, with a glance of fierce indignation ; " and it is well that you have not endeavoured to deceive me. Tell me as frankly then, have you dared to lead my sister to the dwelling of a Nazarene, and suffered her to listen to the ravings of a dying lunatic ? I know the wild belief and still wilder assertions of the woman whom you have visited ; and may God forbid that any one connected with me should ever be deluded with such folly."

" You know nothing of the Christian doctrines, Javan, or you would not call them folly," replied Theophilus.

"You know that Claudia is betrothed to me, and can you wonder if I seek by every means in my power to convince her of the truth of that religion which I have embraced myself? Naomi accompanied me, and she also entered the house of Mary of Bethany; but I may truly say that I have never attempted to shake your sister's faith, or in any way to influence her religious feelings."

Theophilus glanced at Naomi, to remind her of her promise to let him reply to Javan without interruption. He saw her heightened colour and eager expression, and feared that she would boldly avow her faith, rather than tacitly take part in the subterfuge, which for her sake he had employed.

Salome also guessed what was passing in her daughter's mind; and knowing the frankness and intrepidity of her disposition, she was assured that if Javan in any way appealed to her she would confess all her sentiments. She therefore rose from her seat, and summoned Naomi and Claudia to follow her to her own apartment; observing to Zadok that she thought it better they should not remain, but leave it to him and to the rabbi to point out to Theophilus the error of his ways.

Naomi reluctantly obeyed her mother's wishes, for she felt as if she was guilty of hypocrisy and cowardice in leaving her cousin to bear the whole blame of her visit to Mary of Bethany. But she saw that Salome was alarmed—and her own heart told her not without reason—at the idea of Javan's discovering her departure from the Jewish faith; and to satisfy her she promised. when they had reached another apartment, that as long as it was possible to do so without compromising her own sentiments, she would allow her brother to remain in ignorance of them. Claudia likewise was unwilling to quit the cedar hall. She was aware of the violence of Javan's temper, and she feared that the cool deter-

mination of Theophilus would perhaps exasperate him, and excite him to cruelty and persecution; and therefore she wished to remain and hear the result of the debate, even if she could do nothing to soften its nature. From Salome's chamber she could hear the angry voices of Javan and the rabbi, and the more temperate tone of expostulation employed by Zadok; and then the mild and determined replies of Theophilus reached her ear, though she could distinguish nothing of what was said. The conference was long; and before it terminated Judith came in search of her son, and found Salome and the two maidens in a state of great anxiety. The account of what had occurred filled her with alarm for the safety of Theophilus, for she knew far more than his own family did of Javan's unrelenting hatred towards the Christians, and of the active measures which he had taken to discover and bring to punishment any of that despised creed who yet lingered in or near the city.

She freely told her fears to Salome, and found in her kind feelings both sympathy and comfort. The sisters-in-law had always entertained the most sincere affection for each other; and the knowledge of Judith's having adopted a different religion had not altered the sentiments of Salome towards her. They conversed together on the best course to be pursued in order to save Theophilus from his cousin's vengeance; and it was agreed that it would be prudent to hasten the preparations for their departure, and if possible leave Jerusalem before Javan could have time to carry any schemes against his liberty or life into execution. Judith was leaving the room to return to Amaziah, and inform him of what had happened, when Theophilus met her.

"I am come, my dear aunt," he said, with some emotion, "to bid you and Naomi farewell. The discovery that I am a disciple of the holy Jesus, has been the signal of separation between us. Zadok has laid on me a peremptory command to see you no more after

this evening. But whether we meet again in this world or not, my prayers will be continued while I live, that we may meet in a happier world, and there be all united as one family before the throne of the Lamb. I feel confident, Salome, that the Lord will bring you to himself. Your prejudices are already weakened; and our dear devoted Naomi will yet be the happy instrument of leading her mother into the way of truth."

"Do not speak thus to me, Theophilus," replied Salome; "your words have a strange influence over me, but I must not listen to you on that subject. I feared that the result of your confession would be at least a separation between you and your uncle's family. God grant that nothing yet more afflictive to you may follow! Your father will doubtless see the necessity of hastening his departure from the city, and I own I shall rejoice to feel that you are safe in another country. Javan never loved you; and now I know that his dislike will increase to hatred."

"Oh, I do not fear him, Salome," said Theophilus. "He was certainly very violent during our recent conversation; and even made use of threats, to induce me to abjure my religion. But our rulers are too much engaged with civil discord and military preparation to have leisure for religious persecution. We cannot leave Jerusalem until we receive Rufus's permission for Claudia to accompany us. She must leave the city with us, and no personal considerations shall induce me to depart without her."

"Theophilus," interrupted Claudia eagerly, "you shall not remain in danger on my account. If we do not receive my father's reply to Amaziah's letter by the time that you are ready to set out, I tell you frankly that if your mother will take charge of me, I will at once accompany her, and wait at Joppa for my father's consent to our marriage. Do not think me forward in saying this, dear Judith," she added, colouring deeply:

"but I confess I have always had a secret dread of Javan, ever since I knew that Theophilus and Naomi had become Christians; and I shall not feel easy until we are out of his reach. Oh! that my dear Naomi would also go with us, and dwell in safety at Ephesus, until happier days dawn on Jerusalem, and her brother's hatred against our creed has subsided."

"I would join in the request," said Judith, "but I know that it would be useless. Naomi will not desert her mother to ensure her own safety; and she is right. For you, my dear Claudia, circumstances are widely different; and you do quite right in resolving to go with us and your betrothed husband. I have no doubt of your father's cheerful consent to your marriage, for he has no home himself to which he can invite you to return; and Jerusalem is no longer a desirable or safe abode for you. You shall be our beloved daughter, and I will seek to replace to you the parent whom you have lost."

"Zadok will not oppose your kind determination, Claudia," said Theophilus; "for at Javan's urgent request he declared that you, as well as myself, should be prohibited from all intercourse with Naomi, except in his own or Salome's presence. Javan fears that you may communicate to her the heresies you have learnt from me; and he will rejoice in your departure."

"Naomi, dearest Naomi," cried Claudia, "and am I then to be deprived of your society so soon? Is the short time which must elapse ere the wide ocean divides us to be embittered by your brother's cruel plans? I will not consent to it. I will appeal to Zadok. He knows that it is from you and Theophilus I have learnt the blessed faith that I will cherish to my dying hour; and I can have no power to teach you anything. Let me remain with you, my sister, my friend, until I leave you, perhaps for ever!"

Claudia threw herself into the arms of Naomi, with a

sudden burst of grief; and her friend could no longer restrain her own emotions. She saw that almost all her earthly comforts were about to be torn from her, and that she would be left alone to bear her father's displeasure, and probably soon to incur her brother's hatred and cruel oppression. Her mother would, she knew, be ever her kind and sympathising friend; but even she could not enter into all her feelings, or talk with her on the only subject that could now interest her. Of Marcellus she had heard nothing for some time past, and when Claudia should have left Jerusalem, she could not hope to receive any intelligence of him. Probably he would soon forget her; and at all events she felt that they were never likely to meet again. Her heart was heavily oppressed, and she wept silently and sadly.

Javan's abrupt entrance roused her from her anticipated sorrows, to a sense of present trials.

"Your farewell has been a long one, Theophilus: it is high time that my mother and sister were relieved from the presence of an apostate. Are you in tears, Naomi, at parting with Claudia too? The admission of a heathen idolater into our family has brought with it the curse I expected. Even my father's blood is infected with worse than Roman idolatry. The name of the Nazarene impostor is invoked beneath my father's roof. But I will purge out the poison, and see that it spreads no further. Truly, Judith, if you knew of your son's infidelity and madness, you should have warned us of it, and not have suffered him to hold converse with my sister. You should have done more. If he refused to listen to the counsels of Amaziah, and return to the true faith, you should have denounced him to the council. What are all earthly ties compared to the honour of Jehovah? With my own hand would I wipe away the stain of idolatry from my family. And yet," he added, in a lower and sterner voice, "and yet it may be my lot

to do so. Judith, if you and Amaziah are partakers in the impiety of your son, I warn you that it will be discovered; and even the brother of Zadok shall not be screened from offended justice. You need not reply. I have my suspicions; and we will see whether they are well founded. Now leave us, and take your adopted daughter with you. She never was a proper companion for a Jewish maiden. Probably she may become a more suitable wife for a Nazarene apostate."

Claudia caught the arm of Theophilus, trembling with fear and indignation, and urged him to leave the room.

It was Christian forbearance, and consideration for Salome and Naomi, that alone preserved the high-spirited young man from replying to Javan with the severity which he well merited; but he remembered Him who "when he was reviled, reviled not again," and bridling his natural feelings of resentment, he led his mother and Claudia out of the apartment. When they were gone, Salome with tears besought her son to lay aside his anger, and for her sake to take no measures against his father's relatives. Naomi joined her entreaties to those of her mother; but they could prevail little with the fanatical Javan, who used no moderate terms in expressing his opinion not only of Theophilus, but also of his parents: and the family retired to rest with agitated and uneasy feelings.

The following day Javan was absent from home until late in the afternoon, when he came to inform his father that Mary, the daughter of Eleazar, the wealthy lady of Bethezob, had arrived in Jerusalem, having at length followed his counsel, and sought safety for herself and her numerous suite of attendants in the Holy City. She wished to procure a large and handsome dwelling for herself; but Javan told his father that he had assured her she would receive a welcome to his house, until a suitable habitation could be found for her. Zadok

readily confirmed his son's offer, and hastened with him to meet his wife's relative, and conduct her from the inn at which she had stopped to his own spacious house. Both Zadok and his wife had a great regard for Mary, though the expensive and luxurious mode in which she always lived was entirely at variance with the simplicity of their own manners. It is true that the dwelling of the priest was large and well-furnished, and everything in it wore an air of comfort and elegance; but personal luxury and expensive indulgences he entirely despised. His whole equipage, his domestics and attendants, and the attire of his family, were in proper accordance to his rank and station and the customs of his country; but in these things he took no delight, and his children had been brought up to regard them with perfect indifference. Not so Mary of Bethezob. Her mother had died while she was very young, and had left her to the care of a falsely-indulgent father, who allowed her every luxury that his vast wealth could command, and encouraged her to gratify every selfish inclination that arose in her breast. She was very lovely, and her manners were sweet and engaging; but her passions were strong and unrestrained by paternal discipline. Early in life she married a man of piety and good sense, who would probably have greatly improved her character had he lived. But he had died a year before the time when Javan visited her in Peræa, and she was left a young and beautiful widow of independence and power, with one lovely little child scarcely two years old.

Mary was most kindly received by her relatives, and Naomi found consolation and delight in the playful affection of the little David, who attached himself to her immediately, and became her constant companion. Judith and Claudia she saw but seldom, and that only in the presence of her mother or Javan, when no allusion to the subject of religion was permitted, and the con-

versation chiefly turned on their approaching departure. At this time a letter from Rufus was received by his daughter. It was conveyed by an emissary from the Roman general, who wished once more to make an attempt to persuade the rebel Jews to lay down their arms, and for this purpose he wrote to the chiefs and rulers of the city. His proposals were received, as before, with a scornful rejection, and the messenger departed, carrying the offensive reply, and also charged with a letter from Claudia to her father, expressing her grateful thanks for his ready consent to all the arrangements of Amaziah. Rufus was rejoiced at the prospect of his daughter's happiness; and not less so at the idea of her so soon being removed from the threatened city of Jerusalem. He knew that the siege of the metropolis was resolved on by Vespasian, unless the inhabitants submitted again to the authority of Rome; and he was too well acquainted with the pride and obstinacy of the leading Jews to hope that this step would ever be taken by them. He therefore felt how dangerous was his daughter's situation; and he had intended to request the ambassador of Vespasian to take charge of her, and bring her to join him in the Roman camp, when he received the letter of Amaziah to demand her in marriage for his son. He knew and esteemed the brother of Zadok; and though he would have preferred a Roman to a Jew as a husband for his daughter, yet he would not decline so respectable an alliance, and one that promised to procure her safety and happiness in the present unsettled state of the country, and indeed of the whole empire.

We have said before that the subject of religion was not one of any great importance in the opinion of Rufus: he considered that good moral conduct was all that was incumbent on mankind; and as he knew that both Amaziah and his son were remarkable for their excellent lives and honourable behaviour on all occasions, he required

nothing more. But Marcellus looked to higher principles; and when he heard of his sister's intended marriage, it was with sincere joy that he remembered the piety and the pure devotional feelings which he had observed in the family of Amaziah during his residence in Jerusalem. He knew not that the conduct of that family was actuated by Christian motives, or he would indeed have rejoiced at the prospect of his sister's connection with them; but at all events he knew that they were sincere worshippers of the one true God, and his dear Claudia would be preserved from all danger of falling back into idolatry. He therefore joyfully acceded to his father's proposal that they should obtain their general's permission to leave the camp for a short time, and repair to Joppa to meet Amaziah and his party; and that Claudia's marriage should take place there, instead of the ceremony being performed at Jerusalem, according to the wish of Theophilus and his parents. All this plan was duly explained in the letters of Rufus to his daughter and Amaziah, and readily agreed to, as Claudia was overjoyed at the idea of seeing her father and brother before she left Judea, and also of their being present to sanction and bless her marriage.

Rufus further proposed that Zadok and Naomi should accompany their relatives, and promised that if they would consent to do so, he would send a guard of soldiers to meet them at Lydda, and conduct them safely to Joppa, where a number of Roman soldiers were stationed. He knew that it would be a great gratification to Claudia to have her friends' presence on such an occasion; and it would also give him an opportunity of renewing his acquaintance with friends whom he so highly esteemed, and to whom he felt so deeply indebted for their kindness to his daughter.

Claudia flew to Zadok with her father's letter, and rested not until she had obtained his promise to comply with all his arrangements. She then repaired to Salome's

apartment, and joyfully communicated all the welcome intelligence to Naomi and her mother, and received their affectionate congratulations on the happy termination which was thus put to all her anxieties as to the nature of Rufus's reply to Amaziah's letter. Shall we say that Naomi's heart beat violently, and her colour came and went with rapid changes when she heard that she was to meet Marcellus at Joppa? Various feelings added to her emotion. It was now several years since she had seen the Roman youth, and he might be changed from what she remembered him. The kindness and the amiable disposition that had won her young heart might have worn away amid the rough scenes of a military life; or, if he still remained the same engaging and noble-spirited creature that once she loved, (and this his letters to Claudia led her to believe,) yet his affection for her might have died away, and then he would meet her only as his sister's friend. She tried to believe that she could bear this change with great heroism; and at all events she thought that it was better she should see him and know the real state of his feelings at once, and then school her own heart to a corresponding degree of indifference.

His merely Jewish faith—as she considered it to be—was a source of anxiety to her; for while she rejoiced that he was no longer an idolater, she knew that under any circumstances it was her duty to check every hope of being united to him while he acknowledged not the truth of the creed which she had adopted. And how could she expect that time or opportunity would be afforded her to tell him all the wondrous stories which had so powerfully affected her own opinions, or that power should be given her so to set forth the Christian doctrines as to touch his heart and convince his reason? She could not communicate all these doubts and fears to Claudia had she even felt so inclined, for the prohibition to their having any private intercourse was not retracted;

but they occupied her own thoughts while she made her preparations for the intended journey.

Mary of Bethezob removed to a large house in the street adjoining that in which Zadok lived; and when she was established there, she gave way to her natural inclination for gaiety and festivity, and assembled all the thoughtless members of her acquaintance at frequent and magnificent entertainments, utterly regardless of the misery and distress that surrounded her, or of the civil tumults and wild seditions that threatened the safety of the city both by night and by day. Javan was a constant visitor at Mary's house, and made it his place of meeting with those chief men of the popular party whom he was anxious to conciliate and bring over to the schemes of Simon. He despised the levity and ill-timed gaiety of Mary; but he found it convenient to frequent her parties, and appear to share in the festivities in which she delighted, for by this means he became less an object of suspicion to those who opposed his views, and he was able to meet and converse with his coadjutors unnoticed by the gay throng who were only occupied with the pleasures of the present moment.

Javan had also other projects and other schemes, which he pursued with no less eagerness and activity than his political efforts in favour of the son of Gioras. He had not forgotten his wrath against Theophilus, or laid aside his threatened plans of vengeance. He had used every effort to discover the few remaining disciples of Jesus of Nazareth who yet tarried in the city, detained by ties of duty or affection from fleeing with their brethren to Pella; and his endeavours had been so far successful, that already several unhappy creatures had been seized upon and cast into dungeons by those of the priests and Pharisees who shared his fanatical feelings and cruel spirit of persecution. All proper legal authority had long been suspended, and power was all that constituted a right to punish or oppress the

weaker party. A council of priests and elders therefore assembled to decide according to their own will, on the fate of these innocent victims, and Javan was one of their number. His judgment was for death; but he requested his colleagues to defer the execution of the righteous sentence until he was able to add at least one more to the number of the criminals, which he assured them he had no doubt of doing. He informed them of his discovery of Theophilus's apostasy, and his suspicions that his parents also shared his opinions; but he had hitherto abstained from taking his cousin into custody, as he wished for stronger proofs of the guilt of his uncle and Judith before he took so decided a measure against their son as would open their eyes to their own danger, and warn them either to take steps to conceal their opinions, or to flee at once from the city, and thus escape their merited doom. The self-constituted tribunal readily agreed to his suggestions, and warmly applauded his disinterested zeal, which could thus lead him to sacrifice all private and family feelings in his eagerness to promote the honour of Jehovah, and extirpate the abominable heresy which had already spread its baneful influence so far and wide among the children of Abraham. Much was said by these proud Pharisees about the merit of such noble actions, and the favour of God which would be earned by their performance.—How profoundly ignorant were they of the real character of that God whose holy name they profaned! and how little did they act or feel in accordance with his gracious declaration, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice!"

The council broke up, and Javan proceeded to carry on his inquiries as to the evidence which could be produced of the defection of Amaziah and his wife from the faith of Abraham. Nor was the humble Mary of Bethany forgotten. Spies were sent several times to her dwelling, to ascertain with certainty her mode of life and the nature of her worship. They returned to

Javan with an affecting report of her declining state and the heavenly calmness of her mind and conversation and he resolved to visit her himself, and endeavour to obtain her own confession, and hear her own declarations of the ground of her faith and hope. He had a profound contempt of the doctrines of the Christians, as well as a hatred for those who professed them. Their heroical endurance of sufferings and death for the name of their Master appeared to him to be obstinate bigotry; and the heavenly hopes that cheered their spirits and swelled their hearts with joy in the midst of agony and shame, he regarded as the effect of madness, and the delusions of evil spirits leading them on to destruction. Whatever therefore would tend to the extirpation of such a creed, and deter his countrymen from adopting it, he considered to be meritorious, and even benevolent; and if by the infliction of torments or the terrors of death, any nominal Christians were induced to renounce their religion, it was a matter of sincere joy to him, as he believed that their souls were thus saved from perdition. To such lengths may prejudice and fanaticism lead even those who are zealous for the honour of God, while they remain ignorant of that blessed spirit of humility and charity, so beautifully taught both by the life and doctrine of our divine Redeemer.

A day had been fixed for the departure of Amaziah and his companions; and as it approached, Claudia became nervously impatient for the time to arrive when they should be safe beyond the walls of Jerusalem. Her dread of Javan increased daily; and though he endeavoured in his intercourse with Amaziah's family to appear friendly and at his ease, and to dispel the fears that his unguarded threats had excited, yet her watchful anxiety detected that his manner was unnatural, and his kindness and cheerfulness were entirely forced. She felt a dreadful foreboding of evil which she could not conquer, and all the efforts of Theophilus to dispel her

fears, and his repeated assurances that he entertained no suspicions or apprehensions of his cousin, failed to restore her peace and confidence. She had no longer the sanguine and hopeful spirit of Naomi to cheer her as formerly, and charm away her fears; and indeed Naomi herself was not now the same light-hearted being that once she was. Her natural spirits were subdued by care and by deep and serious reflection; but her trust in God, and perfect confidence in his overruling Providence, and his fatherly care for his children in Christ, had replaced the buoyant feelings that arose from youth and health and happiness, and conscious powers of mind and body.

Naomi saw that her friend was uneasy, and she shared her apprehensions, for she perceived that her brother's mind was disturbed, and that he was evidently engaged in some pursuit which made him more gloomy and abstracted than ever. He also questioned her frequently as to the sentiments of Theophilus, and appeared to indulge a hope that he would abandon his new religion, and return to the faith in which he was brought up. Occasionally he would lament that so well-disposed a youth should have become the victim of such wild delusions; and endeavour, as if casually, to discover from his sister whether Amaziah and Judith were infected with the same heresy. He had never yet been informed of their removal to Pella, and Naomi's residence with them there, which was known only to his own family. He supposed that his sister had dwelt with them in their country-house in Bethany during her long absence from home; and as he knew also that Theophilus had remained in Jerusalem the whole of that time, he hoped that she had escaped the pollution of his opinions. Naomi guessed his object in the questions he put to her, and evaded them with wonderful quickness and ingenuity; but from other sources he obtained the information which he sought, and no doubt rested on his mind that his uncle

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and aunt were Nazarenes in their hearts; and, worse than all, that his sister had been instructed in their detested doctrines.

All his suspicions were communicated to his colleagues, who urged him to use secrecy and dispatch in securing such distinguished criminals. The power and influence of Zadok rendered great caution necessary in taking any steps against the persons of his near relatives; and these blood-thirsty men knew well that with all his zeal for religion, and horror of all deviations from the faith of his ancestors, and the customs which were sanctioned by tradition, yet he would never give his consent to any act of cruelty or oppression, or forget the feelings of a brother, to gratify a spirit of bigotry. The aged Mary of Bethany was also marked as a victim; but her seizure was deferred until Amaziah and his family should be secured, as Javan knew that they were in the constant habit of visiting her, and would take alarm if any outrage were offered to her. He repaired himself to her dwelling late one evening; and with all his detestation of her sect, he could not help being impressed by what he saw and heard. The venerable disciple was reposing on her couch when he entered, and Hannah was engaged in reading to her from a roll of parchment, that contained a copy of the Gospel according to St. Matthew Her eyes were dim, and she could no longer pursue her favourite occupation of perusing the sacred record; but she was listening with devout attention, while her faithful attendant read to her the evangelist's account of those events which she so well remembered. The expression of her countenance was so full of piety and resignation, that Javan stood on the threshold, and gazed a moment in admiration and respect. Hannah hastily rolled up the manuscript, and concealed it in the folds of her garment; for the intruder was a stranger to her, and frequent danger had taught her to fear her sentiments being discovered.

Mary also was unacquainted with the person of Javan, but she addressed him courteously, and requested to know the reason of his unexpected visit. Javan replied that he had heard that she was sick and in distress, and he had called to offer her any assistance in his power, as he believed that she was of that sect who were despised and neglected by the rest of mankind. Mary looked at him with a doubtful expression: she had never seen him at any of the Christian meetings, and yet his words led her to infer that he was of that persuasion. For Hannah's sake more than for her own, she wished to be cautious in declaring her religion; and she merely thanked him for his kind offer, and assured him that she was provided with every comfort which her situation required.

"Do not fear, good mother," answered the crafty Javan, "to tell me that you are visited and succoured by Christian friends. I know it already; and it is because I would share with them in the good work of ministering to the necessities of a venerable disciple that I have sought your dwelling. I am a stranger in Jerusalem, and you know me not; but your faith and virtue are known and esteemed by me."

"Are you then a Christian?" asked Mary, with solemn earnestness.

"I wish to know more of the Christian doctrines, before I declare myself to be a disciple," replied Javan evasively; "and I know that there are few so competent to instruct me as yourself, and those noble converts who so frequently come hither to converse with you on the subjects of your faith."

"Are you then acquainted with my friends? To which of them do you allude particularly?" inquired Mary, with guarded anxiety.

"I speak of Amaziah and his excellent wife and son; and also of their niece, the lovely daughter of Zadok. She also has received the faith of Jesus of Nazareth. Am I not right?"

"Now may the Lord Jesus pardon you," said Mary, "if you are deceiving me, and seeking the hurt of those who have shown me kindness. I cannot deny what you already seem to know, that the family of Amaziah became acquainted with me during their constant residence in this neighbourhood; and though I am poor and solitary, they have ever shown themselves my friends. If I knew their religious opinions, I would not tell them to a stranger, who may have evil motives for the inquiry; but for myself I freely own that I am a believer in the holy Jesus, and I glory in the declaration."

"You are too cautious, my worthy friend," said Javan. "Why should you suspect me? I have known the sentiments of your benefactors for some time, and I have not injured them, though you must be aware how ready our rulers are to receive information of any who follow that persuasion, and to inflict severe punishment on them. Confide in me without apprehension, and remember, that by your instructions you may benefit my soul. That roll of a book which your domestic was reading, and which seemed so deeply to engross your attention—was it not a copy of the sacred records of your religion? I know it was, and I entreat you to allow me to see it. I have long wished for such an opportunity of acquiring more accurate information concerning those wonderful things that are related of the holy Jesus of Nazareth."

Mary was entirely without guile herself, and she had for so many years lived separate from the world, that she had forgotten to be suspicious. Even the troubles and persecutions which she had witnessed, and in some degree shared, had not taught her any great degree of what is called worldly prudence, or dimmed the pure flame of universal love and charity, that had been lighted by the reflection of the perfect pattern of her Lord and Master. To honour Him, and to do good to the souls of her fellow-creatures, were the first objects of her life;

and in the attainment of these objects she was ready to endure danger, suffering, and even death. She was not entirely satisfied of the sincerity of her strange visitor, and she suspected that her conduct had been watched by spies for some time past; but she would not seek to conceal her faith when it was possible to glorify her Redeemer, or enlighten the spirit of an inquiring sinner. Her own safety was not to be put in the balance with such considerations, but she was resolved that nothing should induce her to betray her friends.

She turned to Hannah, who sat in fear and trembling, listening to the conversation of the deceitful Javan, and said, "My daughter, give me the blessed volume which it is your privilege to read. Oh that in time the truths it contains may enter your heart, and dispel all the clouds of error and prejudice that dwell there. You may retire now, for I wish to speak to this young disciple in private. It is better," she added addressing Javan, as Hannah hastily left the room, "it is better to dismiss that simple creature. She is well-intentioned; but we must not trust any one too unreservedly in these days. You might be sorry to have it known that you confessed yourself a Christian, even to the aged and despised Mary of Bethany."

"Thank you, my good friend," replied Javan, "for your care of my safety: trust me to be as watchful of yours. Now give me the book, and point out to me the most striking portions that I may read, and my faith may be confirmed."

Mary did as he required, and Javan read aloud many of the most deeply interesting passages in the inspired narrative, while his aged companion commented on the words he read, and endeavoured to impress the spirit of them on his heart. The beautiful simplicity of the language, the sublime purity of the doctrines, and the marvellous nature of the events which he read, had power to engage his attention and delight his mind;

but alas! so strongly were the chains of bigotry and error riveted on his soul, that even the words of inspiration did not shake them off: and while he sat by the bedside of the dying saint, and heard her tell of all that the Lord had done for her soul, and saw her faith and hope and love, even then he was devising a way to deliver her into the hands of the Pharisees and priests, and make her a victim to their cruelty. He was the agent of Satan, while he believed himself the servant of God.

CHAPTER XIII.

Hannah hastily left the chamber in which Mary and Javan were conversing, and her benevolent mistress rejoiced that her little scheme for withdrawing her from the notice of the inquisitive stranger had succeeded. She hoped that he would regard her merely as a common domestic, whose part it was to attend and read to her employer, but who might take no part in her religious opinions, and be no object for his persecution, should such be the evil intention which brought him to the house. But it was not to secure her own safety alone that Hannah so instantly obeyed her beloved mistress. She did not abandon her to danger, and seek to avoid sharing it. The faithful creature fled from the house; and though it was now the second watch of the night, and the dim light of the twinkling stars was all that remained to guide her feet, she hurried down the Mount of Olives, crossed the valley, and in a surprisingly short time reached a small postern gate in the wall of the city, that opened into a passage leading immediately to Zadok's house.

The great gates of the city had been closed and guarded at the usual hour; and Hannah knew that she should have great difficulty in obtaining an entrance by presenting herself at any of them. But she had frequently passed through this private door, on errands from Mary to her friends Amaziah and Judith, and she believed that they possessed the means of opening it at all hours; she therefore called loudly on the name of one of

their domestics, and was quickly heard and answered. She requested permission to see Judith immediately; and as Zadok had put no restrictions on his brother's family, and allowed them to receive whom they would in their own apartments, she was led without delay to the room where they were assembled.

They were engaged in evening prayer when Hannah entered. Her presence did not disturb their devotions; and the Christian servant knelt with them, and joined her prayers to theirs. Amaziah was concluding his customary act of worship, by imploring the blessing and protection of the Lord on themselves, and all their brethren of the church of Christ; and also that it would please him to turn the hearts of their enemies and persecutors, to pardon those who sought to injure them, and to bring them also to a knowledge of salvation. When the little congregation rose from their knees, Hannah exclaimed, "May our prayers be heard for my holy and beloved mistress, and for you, my excellent benefactors! I have come from Bethany, at this late hour, to tell you that the enemies of our blessed Master are surely contriving the hurt of his servants; and to entreat you to take measures for the safety of your own family and the venerable Mary. For some days past our usually solitary dwelling has been frequented by strangers. Some of them have seen and conversed with my mistress: she did not commit herself to them, but they must have seen by her piety and cheerful resignation that she was a Christian. Others I contrived to send away, and told her not. I have heard, and probably you have heard it also, that several of our brethren who, like myself, yet tarried in the neighbourhood, poor and forgotten, or dwelt as Naomi does with their unconverted relatives, have been searched for, and taken captive · and this very evening a stranger of dark and mysterious aspect has come to our house. He entered unbidden, and found me reading the blessed

book. He tried to make Mary believe that he was partly convinced of the truth of our holy faith, and sought to be further instructed; and I fear she believed him, for she professed her belief in Jesus, and even put into his hands the volume which I had endeavoured to conceal. He used various arts to make her declare all she knew of you, Amaziah, and your excellent family; but this she would not do. I left the deceiver—for such I am convinced he is—still talking to her, and perusing the book which she delivered to him. I heard him reading the sacred words of inspiration as I left the house; and I have now hurried to you for counsel and assistance."

"Was the stranger young?" interrupted Claudia, eagerly: "was he tall and pale, with sunken eyes, and dark contracted brows? Oh, my fearful heart tells me who he was!"

"You have described him exactly," replied Hannah; "and, strange as it may appear, there was an expression in his countenance when he smiled that reminded me of the lovely lady Naomi, and almost charmed away my suspicions. But I knew that he was a traitor at heart."

"It must be Javan!" exclaimed Claudia; "I know that he will bring evil upon us yet. Oh that we were safe beyond the reach of his malice!"

"My dear Claudia," said Theophilus, "do not suffer your apprehensions thus to prevail over your better judgment. I cannot believe that Javan would really seek to injure his nearest relatives. I know that some of our brethren have lately been apprehended, and my father has used great influence in their favour—I hope with success; but I have not heard that Javan was in any way concerned in their discovery; and his manner has been as friendly since our unhappy disagreement as it was before, so that I believe it has not really affected his feelings."

"You look on every one as possessing your own open, generous spirit, Theophilus. I think I know Javan better than you do, and I would not trust his specious hypocritical appearance of friendship for one moment. Dear Judith, will you not share my fears? It is for Theophilus that I tremble, for I am convinced that Javan's enmity is strongly excited against him."

Judith and Claudia felt alike, and while they communicated their apprehensions, Amaziah and his fearless son were occupied in questioning Hannah concerning the strangers who had lately been seen at Bethany, as well as the visitor who had excited so much alarm on the present occasion. They were all aware that Mary's days were numbered, and they could not bear the idea of leaving Jerusalem while she lived. It was impossible to take her with them in her present state; and it would be difficult even to remove her to a safe asylum, should they be able to find one. They desired Hannah to return to her without loss of time, and assure her that they would watch over her safety, and if possible visit her the following day to arrange their plans. Theophilus declared his intention of accompanying Hannah back to Bethany, both to protect her by the way, and also to converse with Mary, and hear further particulars of what had passed between her and her visitor.

Claudia would have opposed this intention, but she knew it would be useless. She however persuaded Theophilus to disguise his person as much as possible, that if he should meet Javan on his way back to the city he might not be recognised. He did not return home for some hours; but neither his parents nor Claudia had retired to rest, for they were anxious to see him safe again, and to hear the result of his expedition. His communication did not allay the fears of Claudia. He had met a stranger enveloped in a cloak, as he crossed the bridge over the brook Kedron, and he

was compelled unwillingly to own that he believed it to have been his cousin; and he was confirmed in this opinion by all that Mary told him. She entreated him to forbear coming to her house again, and to desire his parents to do the same, and also to use all possible expedition in setting out on their journey, before it should be too late. He added that their beloved friend appeared exhausted, and he had no doubt that she would soon be removed to her rest. He had promised her that they would none of them visit her the following day, as they would probably be watched; but Hannah was to let them know if anything further took place to cause alarm.

The day after the events which have just been related, Mary of Bethezob held a feast in her splendid dwelling, and the families of Zadok and Amaziah were invited to it. It was not much in accordance with Zadok's sentiments to frequent such scenes of gaiety; but as Mary was his relative he would not refuse to comply with her request, and he desired that Salome and Naomi would accompany him. This was a trying command to his daughter for her Christian principles had taught her to shun all such revels and festivities, and she knew that it was the practice of all her brethren to abstain from mixing in the pleasures and follies of the world: but she felt that in this instance she was called on to obey her father, as he did not require of her anything that would directly compromise her opinions; and with a heavy heart she adorned herself for the feast. Amaziah and Judith declined the visit altogether; but Zadok desired Claudia to accompany his daughter, and she was very willing to seize this opportunity of conversing with her friend more freely than she had been permitted to do of late.

About the ninth hour of the day they repaired to the house of the rich lady of Bethezob, and Javan was of the party. He had never appeared so lively and so

little abstracted. Perhaps he had been successful in his political schemes, or perhaps he saw a prospect of the speedy gratification of his religious and private revenge. He remained so long with his sister and Claudia, that they feared he did not intend to leave them any time for private conversation; but, happily, after the banquet was concluded, he was called away by one of his most active assistants in forwarding the cause of Simon, and the two maidens found themselves at a distance from him they feared, and able to escape from the busy throng to a spot where they could communicate their thoughts and feelings unobserved by his keen eye and quick suspicious ear.

The splendour of the entertainment, and the glittering magnificence of the dresses of the visitors, could not engage their attention. Their thoughts were occupied with other things, and they only felt the emptiness and vanity of all around them. They passed through the marble columns of a beautiful arcade, which was adorned with aromatic shrubs and flowers in vases of exquisite workmanship, and hung with draperies of purple and gold, that threw a luxurious shade on the gilded walls, and inlaid pavement of costly stones and metals, and softened the glowing rays of the western sun. Claudia and Naomi paused not to regard the beauty of the gallery; they hastened through the gay and animated crowd, and sought the retirement of the thickly-planted garden into which it opened. When they believed themselves to be out of hearing of any of the party, they conversed with freedom and confidence on the subjects which at that time so deeply interested them. Claudia related the particulars of all that had occurred the preceding night, and declared her conviction that Javan was concerting some scheme of evil against the whole family, or at all events against Theophilus. She entreated Naomi to prevail on her father to be ready to leave the city with them on the third day from that time,

as Amaziah, she hoped, would yield to her fears, and consent to set out at that period. To this her friend readily agreed, as she also suspected the intentions of her brother; and she promised that, if possible, he should remain ignorant of their departure being hastened. The condition of the aged Mary then occupied their attention; and deeply did Naomi regret that she could not go to her as formerly, to listen to her holy instructions, and to cheer her declining life by her affectionate attentions.

"Once more, dear Claudia, I must see her. Whatever dangers may befall me, I am resolved, if possible, to behold her blessed countenance again, and receive her parting benediction. I have been wishing for some days to see you or Judith, that I might give you a letter which I had prepared. It was merely to request you would devise some method by which I could accompany you to Bethany. I met Hannah two days ago, as I was going with Deborah to gather fruit in my father's garden by the brook, and she told me that our dear Mary was sinking. I have been very unhappy ever since, for I feared she would die, and I should not behold her again on earth."

"Amaziah and Judith and Theophilus are gone to visit her this evening," replied Claudia. "They knew that Javan would be here, and that therefore they might go with safety. If possible, they intend to remove her to Amaziah's house near Bethany, where a friend of his now resides, who, though not a Christian, is a good and charitable man, and will protect her for the short time she has yet to live. They propose to do this immediately, if her strength will allow of it; and when she is safe from Javan's malice you may visit her without danger, for your brother will not know whither she is gone, or suspect that the good Benjamin can harbour a Nazarene beneath his roof."

"Mary can never live many days, from what Hannah

said," answered Naomi. "It is useless to carry her away from her home; but I will go there and see her. Will you request Judith to accompany me the evening after to-morrow. I know that Javan will be occupied for some hours at a meeting of the elders and priests, for I heard him make the engagement. But whether he discovers me or not I am resolved to go. I feel sure that I cannot long conceal my religion from him, and it would be a relief to me to be spared the effort. Were it not for my dear mother's sake, I think I could brave the worst that he could do; and even death itself would not be very terrible, if I could glorify my Lord and Master. Life has but little to offer me now—and the sacrifice would not be great."

"Do not speak so sadly, my dearest Naomi," said Claudia. "It has indeed been your lot to have many trials of late, and it grieves my heart to think how lonely you will be when we are gone, and our dear Mary is taken from you. Oh that you could be persuaded to go with us! But since that cannot be, and you feel that it is your duty to remain with those who have not the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, I believe that he will send you comfort, and enable you to bear every trial."

"Yes, Claudia, I know he will. It is wrong of me to feel so much depressed as I do now, but my spirit is very sad. I am not afraid of any trials that may befall me by the appointment of my gracious Master; I think that, trusting in Him, I shall have strength to keep my faith without wavering. But I do dread the spiritual desolation and solitude that await me when all my Christian friends, all whom I love in the Lord, are removed far away. Once I cherished a hope that my beloved mother was awakening to the truth; and if she would listen to all that I could say, I think her gentle, pious spirit would rejoice to believe the glad tidings of salvation by a Redeemer. But she seems to fear the subject,

I will continue to pray day and night that the Lord himself will teach her: and I will try to hope, and not doubt His mercy. Oh if I could be the blessed instrument in His hands of showing my mother the only way of peace, what joy, what triumph would be mine! And then my father too—he would hearken to Salome, though not to me; and he would see the happiness and the blessed fruits that spring from faith in the Lord Jesus—and he too would become a holy, zealous disciple. O Lord, my God," she added fervently, while her eyes were lighted with all their wonted fire, and her hands were clasped with energy, "grant me my heart's desire. Let me see my parents at the foot of the cross, let me hear them call on the name of thy Son, and then I could share with them the most fearful death of torment to seal our faith, and be thankful."

"May the Lord hear your prayer, my Naomi, and avert the doom that you almost seem to covet. Surely happier days are in store for you. You were always wont to speak to me of hope and courage, and I feel that I am not able to give you consolation. In your own pious and confiding spirit you will find it, when I am not here to use my feeble efforts. How rejoiced I am that your father has consented to go with us to Joppa! In three more days we shall, I hope, be safely journeying thither; and as we are to travel in the same litter, we shall enjoy many hours of undisturbed conversation and happiness together; and at Joppa too, we shall be together and happy. You will see Marcellus, and you will find how true is his attachment to you, in spite of time and absence. Naomi, if Zadok would consent, would you be my sister indeed? Would you unite yourself to Marcellus, now that he is no longer an idolater, and trust to your prayers and your instructions to bring him into the fold of Christ?"

A deep blush mounted to the pale cheeks of Naomi, and as rapidly subsided, while she subdued the emotion

that was excited by Claudia's question, and replied as calmly as she could:

"I will not attempt to conceal from you, my dearest friend, that if I were permitted to choose my lot in life, I would rather be the wife of Marcellus than share the throne of the Emperor. I loved him as a child; and when we grew up I loved him still, in spite of his being a Roman and an idolater. Now he is a believer in the true God, and I feel confident he will one day be a believer also in his incarnate Son. Should that be the case, and we should then meet, with the same feelings of attachment with which we parted, it would be my greatest happiness to become your sister. But all this is a mere dream, and never likely to be realised. I must try to banish it from my thoughts, as I have so often done before."

"We shall see, dear Naomi. I prophesy better things," said Claudia gaily. "I begin to see everything on the bright side now; I suppose for the selfish reason that my own prospects are so happy and so prosperous. Three days will soon be gone, and Javan can hardly do us any injury in that time, and then all will be well except parting with you. Now let us return to the house, for our long absence may be observed, and remember we are to start before daybreak. I may not have another opportunity of talking to you alone."

As they rose from the marble bench on which they had been seated, a slight rustling was heard among the leaves of a thick clump of bushes very near them; and Naomi hastily laid her hand on Claudia's arm, and held up her finger in token of silence. They both looked earnestly before them, and distinctly saw a human form moving stealthily away, as if to avoid the path by which they were about to proceed towards the house.

"Javan!" whispered Claudia, in breathless agitation, when the figure had passed away, and was concealed in a distant thicket.

"The Lord forbid it!" replied Naomi, with a deep sigh. "If he has overheard our conversation, all your plans are detected, and we are all betrayed. Javan was leaving the great saloon, in deep conference with that dreadful-looking friend of his, Isaac, the counsellor, when we entered the gallery, and he certainly did not see us. But if any one has listened to our discourse it may be of serious consequence. Let us hasten back to my father and mother; and it may be that only the latter part of our conversation was heard, and that the listener may not know who we are."

At this moment a loud shout was heard from the house—the sound of the timbrels and the harps, which had come sweetly to the ears of the young maidens, mingled with the sighing of the evening breeze, suddenly ceased, and were succeeded by cries of terror and shrieks of pain. Lights were seen passing rapidly to and fro, and soon a number of women issued from the gallery, and fled in confusion through the garden.

It was evident that some terrible calamity had befallen, and Naomi and Claudia hastened to ascertain the cause of all the alarm. They met Mary of Bethezob and several of her female attendants hurrying to the darkest and thickest part of the garden, loaded with cups and vases of gold and silver, and rich brocaded furniture, which they seemed anxious to secure from some apprehended destruction.

"Is the dwelling on fire?" cried Naomi.

"No," replied Mary, "it is far worse; it is filled with a band of Zealots, who are plundering and destroying all my possessions, and slaying all who oppose them."

"Where are my father and mother?" inquired Naomi eagerly. "Are they exposed to the violence of their worst enemies?" She was hastening towards the house to seek her parents, but turned again, and inquired—

"Where too is dear little David?"

Mary dropped her rich burden, and exclaimed

"O my child! I had forgotten him. He was playing in the vestibule just before the ruffians entered. Seek him, Naomi, for the love of heaven seek him! If he hears your voice he will come to you. The Zealots would not hurt him, for it was plunder they came to obtain."

Naomi looked for one moment in astonishment at the mother, who thus called on others to save her child, while she feared to return herself to seek him; and then she ran swiftly up the terraced walk, followed by Claudia, who forgot her natural timidity in her anxiety for the safety of her friend. They entered the gallery, calling loudly the names of Salome and David. The din of arms, and all the sounds of a fierce conflict, were heard from the grand apartments, but the gallery and passages were deserted. They advanced cautiously, still calling Salome and the child; and soon had the delight of hearing their cries answered, and saw the little boy bound from behind the folds of a curtain, followed by Salome, who tremblingly advanced and exclaimed:

"Blessed be the God of Israel! you are safe, my daughter. I have sought you in every apartment; and when I could not find you I concealed myself in this place to watch for you. I could not leave the house while I believed that you and Claudia were yet in danger. But come, now let us hasten away. Zadok has promised to follow us as soon as the ruffians are gone. He found this poor little child in the midst of the struggle and confusion, and bore him away in safety, when all others seemed to forget him. The sweet little creature clung to me, and called for his mother; but she had fled away at the first alarm, and I know not where she is gone."

While Salome was speaking, Naomi had caught up her little favourite in her arms, and they were all hasten-

ing down the gallery. They soon found Mary in the garden, concealed behind the trunk of a large tree, but looking anxiously towards the house to watch for Naomi's return with her child. When she saw him safe, she burst forth into passionate exclamations of joy and gratitude, while she overpowered the little boy with caresses.

"Why did you go away, and leave David with the robbers?" asked the child innocently. "They would have killed him, if Zadok had not come."

Mary looked at her rescued wealth, and wondered how she could have forgotten her only child in her eagerness to save such paltry spoil. Always a creature of impulse, she now felt that her child was more precious to her than even her own life; but another hour might find her engrossed with some new object.

"Where shall I take you to, my sweet boy? I will fly to any cave or hole in the rocks to save you. If the assassins come this way we are lost. Salome, guide me to some safe spot, and let me not see my darling massacred before my face!"

The increasing sounds that issued from the house seemed to indicate that the combatants were approaching the entrance to the garden, and the affrighted group knew not in what direction to fly, until one of the domestics remembered that a small wicket in the garden wall opened into a narrow lane on the other side, and led to the gardens of some of the neighbouring houses. Mary had forgotten this outlet, which was seldom used, and was almost overgrown with the hanging branches of a vine; but she quickly caught at the idea, and ran to the spot, followed by all her companions. The bolts were withdrawn, and they all passed through into the dark street, and groped their way along, till Naomi having advanced before the rest, recognised a turn that led to her father's house. It was the same private entrance by which Hannah had been admitted the pre-

ceding night, and by which also Naomi had so frequently passed out to wend her way to Bethany.

The discovery was hailed with joy, and in a few minutes the whole party were safely lodged in the house of Zadok.

The noise of their entrance brought Amaziah and his wife and son to inquire the cause of their hasty return; and on learning the act of violence which the Zealots had committed, Amaziah and Theophilus armed themselves, and went forth with some of their attendants to render all the assistance in their power. Claudia and her friend were rejoiced to see them returned from their visit to Bethany, and were eager to know how they had found Mary, and whether they had conveyed her away to the protection of Benjamin; but they could not gratify their curiosity until some time had passed in narrating the particulars of the scene of confusion from which they had just escaped. Then they drew Judith away from the rest of the party to Naomi's chamber, and learned from her that their venerable friend had rallied considerably since the last time she had seen her; and that finding how averse they all were to leave the city while she remained so unprotected at Bethany, she had consented to be removed to Benjamin's dwelling. She had however deferred the journey until the last evening previous to their departure; for she desired to remain in her own home as long as possible, and felt no apprehension of being molested so long as they were near to succour and defend her.

"You, my dear Naomi," continued her aunt, "shall accompany us to that beloved dwelling when we go on that night to bid her farewell, and give her up to the care of Benjamin. He will meet us there with a litter, and we shall have the happiness of knowing that our aged and declining friend will receive from him and his wife all the care and attention that she can require for the short remainder of her days. I will myself request

your mother to consent to your going for the last time to see her to whom you owe so much; and even Javan, if he hears of it, can feel no surprise that you should wish to take leave of her before her death, as he knows that you visited her with Theophilus."

"I thank you, my dear aunt," said Naomi; "my heart is set upon beholding her again, and I have been talking to Claudia on the subject. She says that you have determined to leave Jerusalem in three days; and Mary can never survive until our return. But I am glad you have hastened your departure, for there is danger in your remaining here; and even now you may have tarried with us too long. I grieve to tell you that Claudia and I were so imprudent this evening as to talk aloud of all our hopes and fears and plans, in the garden of the house we have fled from. We thought we were far removed from every human ear, and we spoke freely; but alas! I fear we were overheard, for we saw some one glide cautiously away as we prepared to leave the spot where we were seated. I have learnt to be suspicious lately, and I would that you were all safe beyond the reach of those who wish you evil."

"I trust it will be so ere long," replied Judith. "I will apprise Amaziah of your apprehensions; and by proper precautions I hope we may yet escape all danger. Tell me what you had been saying, which you fear may have been overheard."

Naomi repeated the chief points of the conversation, only omitting that part which related to Marcellus; and Judith was greatly alarmed at finding that so much had been said, which, if repeated, would place them all in the power of their enemies. She did not, however, express all that she felt; and Salome's voice was heard calling Naomi to return to the cedar hall, as her father had just entered and inquired for her. She ran to meet him, and rejoiced to find that he and his friends had escaped unhurt from the combat. He informed them

that the Zealots had been at length defeated, and driven back to their strongholds; but not until they had killed or wounded several of those who opposed their violence, and carried off a great quantity of plunder. The house of the lady of Bethezob was dismantled, and in such a state of confusion and havoc that it would be impossible for her to return that night; and he therefore invited her to remain under his roof until the wreck of her valuable household property could be arranged, and her own home prepared to receive her again. This was readily agreed to, and the rest of the fugitives having departed to their respective abodes, all was again restored to quietness. But what peace, what security could be felt in a city which was exposed to such scenes of outrage as that which had just been witnessed? Who could feel that their property or their lives were secure for an hour, while robbers and murderers could openly traverse the streets, and forcibly enter any house that offered temptation to plunder, unchecked by any legal power, and unchastised by any arm of justice?

It was an unprecedented state of society, and never may the world again behold its equal! It was civil war in its most dreadful form. The city held within its walls many conflicting parties, and each was animated by the most deadly feelings of hatred towards the others. Murder and rapine prevailed in every quarter, while religious zeal yet distinguished many individuals of each party. The blood of bulls and goats flowed in sacrifice from the altars that still remained uncleansed from the human gore that had been shed in the frequent combats within the temple. None moved through the streets unarmed or unattended; and a strong guard generally accompanied any female of distinction who was induced to venture far from home. And yet in the midst of all this crime and misery the wildest dissipation was carried on. It was not only in the house of Mary of Bethezob that feasts and revels were celebrated; the dwellings of

numbers of the rich and gay sent forth the sounds of music and of mirth as loudly and as frequently as when Zion dwelt in peace, and none could harm them. Such thoughtless levity appears incomprehensible; but danger had become familiar to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and they seemed heedless of the scenes of bloodshed that daily met their eyes. Is it not the same infatuation that now blinds the eyes of our fellow-sinners around us, who walk on in a course of sin and folly, and mark not the warnings that are vouchsafed to them by the Lord, and dread not the destruction into which they see their companions falling day by day?—a destruction more appalling and more lasting than the death and the miseries inflicted by the Zealot robbers of Jerusalem.

It was midnight before Javan returned to his father's house. When the lawless band had been expelled from Mary's house, and driven to their own abode in the temple courts, he was slowly proceeding homewards, and meditating on the period when he could safely summon the son of Gioras to enter the city, and take the lead among so many contending parties. He hoped that the presence of Simon would put an end to the lesser factions, and he determined to use every exertion to prepare the way for his reception. He was engaged with these reflections when his friend Isaac approached him, accompanied by a stranger in the garb of a domestic. The streets were dark, but the man carried a lamp, which threw its light on a countenance well suited to take a part in the bloody and vindictive scenes that characterized the time, and had already hardened the hearts of the greatest part of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

"Javan," said the counsellor, in a low voice, when they met, "this man has somewhat to relate which concerns you nearly. The leaven of apostasy has spread further and deeper than you imagined; and vigorous measures must be adopted to extirpate it at once. From

the lips of your own sister this faithful and zealous man has heard enough to prove that she herself, as well as Amaziah and his wife and son, and the Roman maid to whom he is betrothed, are enthusiastic disciples of the Nazarene."

"Ha!" cried Javan fiercely, "is it really so? But I had strongly suspected it. Naomi is altogether changed since my absence from the city; and doubtless it is this foul heresy with which she is infected that has damped her spirit, and made her what she is. But tell me, who is your informer, and how came he to hear my sister speak on such a subject?"

"His name is Reuben, and he is a domestic in the house of Mary of Bethezob. This very evening he was passing through the garden when he saw two maidens sitting in a retired spot, and evidently deeply engrossed with the subject of their discourse. Curiosity led him to approach, and unobserved by them he listened to their conversation. Reuben, repeat to the noble Javan all that you have already related to me."

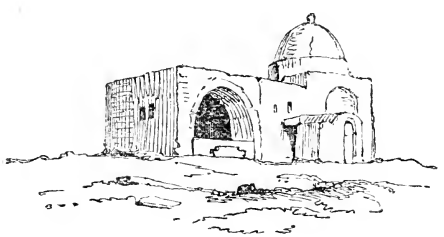
The treacherous servant did as he was commanded; and Javan listened with deep interest to the detail of all that had passed between the unsuspicious friends. To hear that his uncle and Judith had adopted the Nazarene faith did not at all astonish him, for he had already ascertained their opinions, and those of Claudia. But Naomi's conversion had hitherto been only a matter of suspicion and fear; and every feeling of his breast was excited with painful intensity, as the dreadful fact became incontestably evident. His indignation was wound to its highest pitch when Reuben proceeded to repeat that part of the conversation which so plainly revealed his sister's attachment to Marcellus, and the hope that was cherished in her heart of one day being united to him. It was with difficulty that the fiery young Jew restrained the expression of his passion; but he chose not that Reuben should see how deeply he was moved: and when

he had finished his recital, he merely threw to him his purse as a reward for his treason; and laying his hand on the dagger that was placed in his girdle, sternly commanded him, as he valued his life, to preserve all he had heard a secret from every other ear.

Reuben departed, well pleased with the prize that had been so easily earned, and resolved not to run the risk of incurring the vengeance of the dreaded Javan by revealing the service for which he had obtained it. Isaac and his friend did not separate so soon; they retired to the house of the counsellor, to consider how they should act upon the information they had just received, and how they should frustrate all the plans of their intended victims. The helpless Mary of Bethany was marked as the first to be secured; and the very evening on which Amaziah and his friend intended to place her in security was fixed on for the execution of the cruel design. Javan saw that there would be danger of exciting a tumult if she was taken prisoner on the following day, when Amaziah would have time to make inquiries after her, and interest his friends in her behalf. But the plan which he proposed to Isaac was, that they should obtain a strong body of men from the chief priests, and repair to Bethany before the hour at which his uncle intended to be there with his family; and when they had ascertained that the whole party were assembled together in Mary's house, that they should enter the dwelling, and seize on all the Nazarenes at one blow. When this was effected, he felt assured that no influence would be exerted in their favour sufficient to procure their liberty. Javan knew not that his father was already aware of his brother's heretical opinions; and he did not doubt that the discovery would at once sever all ties between them, and make Zadok as violent an enemy of Amaziah as he was himself.

All the arrangements were agreed upon by Javan and his companion, who fully approved of the iniquitous

scheme, and promised to lend his aid for its execution; and they parted with an understanding that the council should meet on the following night, instead of the evening which had been appointed, and which was now to be otherwise occupied. Javan retired to rest that night with a feeling of great satisfaction at the prospect of so soon having the persons of his uncle and Theophilus in his power. It was against the latter that he proposed to direct his chief efforts, for if he succeeded in securing him, his chief object would be attained. He would then be enabled to gratify his own evil feelings of personal malice and fanatical cruelty, and also prevent the alliance of his cousin with a Gentile maid. The knowledge of his engagement to Claudia had greatly increased his hatred towards Theophilus; and in order to frustrate the intended connection, and save his family from the contamination of Roman blood, he felt that any act, however cruel, would be not only justifiable but meritorious.



CHAPTER XIV.

The lady of Bethezob dwelt in Zadok's house, and her domestics were busily employed the following day in removing the traces of the incursion of the Zealots. It was hopeless to seek any restitution of the valuable effects which had been carried off, or any punishment of the offenders; for who could enter their strongholds, and bear away any of their members before a tribunal of justice? Javan took advantage of the late occurrence to plead with great eloquence in the council that evening the necessity of inviting Simon and his powerful band to enter the city, and protect the inhabitants from the violence of John of Gischala and his ruffian crew. His arguments had great weight with his hearers; and some who had hitherto opposed his object, now began to fear that it was the only step which remained to them, by which they could hope to check the oppressions of their present masters. Isaac was a warm supporter of all Javan's proposals: he had always inclined to the admission of the son of Gioras; and he now ardently desired the adoption of any measure by which the insolence of the Zealots might be chastised, and vengeance obtained for the injury done to the lovely daughter of Eleazar.

The wealth of this lady, as well as her beauty, had engaged the attention of the counsellor. He was a constant visitor at her house; and finding that his society was welcome to Mary, he had determined to make proposals of marriage to her. The destruction and loss of so much of her valuable furniture and household effects,

as he had witnessed the preceding evening, had exasperated him greatly, and excited a strong desire for revenge against the aggressors; but he knew that her posssesions in land and money were so great as to render the injury easily reparable, and he made up his mind no longer to delay his proposals.

The council being almost unanimous on the subject of Simon, Javan next informed them of the discovery he had made of the adoption of the Nazarene religion by the members of his own hitherto unsullied family. The recital was listened to with great interest by the assembly, who were all exceedingly zealous for the honour of the law of Moses and the traditions of the elders,—but most lamentably negligent of God's eternal law of mercy and justice. They triumphed in the proof they had now obtained that Javan's suspicions had been correct; and more maliciously still did they exult in the near prospect of seizing on the objects of their hatred, and wreaking on them all that cruelty and bigotry could suggest. Javan did not wish that his uncle and his family should be put to death. He desired that by rigorous imprisonment and other sufferings they should be induced to retract their opinions; and he obtained a promise from his colleagues, that every effort should be used to bring them back to the true faith before any extreme measures should be resorted to. He also stipulated that his sister should not be captured. He had not yet stifled every feeling of affection for her; nor could he contemplate the idea of his mother's anguish, if Naomi was to be torn from her, without some sympathy. He trusted that when she saw the evils to which her relatives were exposed by their religion, she would be affrighted for her new opinions, and gladly return to the faith for which she had once been so zealous. He knew not the soul of his heroic sister, or the power of true Christian faith to make a weaker spirit than hers meet shame, and death, and agony unmoved!

The assembly broke up, after having appointed a body of guards to attend Javan to Bethany the following evening, and to obey his commands in all things; and the young Pharisee then turned his steps homewards, accompanied by Isaac. All in Zadok's house appeared cheerful and at peace, for Naomi had not communicated her own uneasy feelings and apprehensions even to her mother; and she exerted herself to appear in more than her usual spirits. Never did she sing more sweetly, or converse with more animation; and so gaily did she play with little David, and follow his sportive steps from place to place, that Javan began to imagine that he had been deceived by Reuben, or that the man himself had mistaken some other persons for his sister and Claudia. But yet the minuteness of the particulars which the informer had related, and the names of the individuals which he had repeated, forced him to believe his testimony, corroborated as it was by his own previous suspicions; and he concluded that Naomi was rejoicing in the prospect of her beloved relatives being so quickly removed beyond his reach, and in the hope that her own share in their guilt would remain unknown. She looked so lovely and so innocent, that he thought she could not yet have imbibed very deeply those opinions which he believed to be so impious and so productive of evil; and he longed to see her again restored to her duty, and taking a cheerful part in all those Jewish rites and ceremonies in which he had so often beheld her the admiration of all. Isaac too was much struck with her beauty, her accomplishments, and her amiable manners; and he privately encouraged Javan to adopt gentle measures with her, and if possible to conceal her errors from her parents, until he had himself endeavoured to correct them by argument and persuasion and even by threats.

Before the counsellor departed that evening, he took an opportunity of declaring his hopes and wishes to

Mary; and she returned a favourable answer. She wished for rank and distinction; and though she had no particular attachment or esteem for Isaac, yet she considered that by uniting herself to him she should obtain the object of her ambition; and as the wife of so noble and powerful a man, she should meet with more consideration, and possess more influence than in her widowed and solitary state. She therefore consented that when her affairs could be settled, and her estates in Peræa disposed of, for the benefit of her son after her death, she would bestow her hand on Isaac; and the arrangement was made known to Zadok and his family as her nearest relatives. They had nothing to oppose to her choice, though her suitor was by no means a favourite with any of them, except Javan. He rejoiced greatly in the proposed connexion, as he thought that Isaac would thus be more firmly united to his own party, and by his increased wealth, be better enabled to assist his projects, and obtain fresh adherents.

The morning of the next day was passed in completing the various preparations for the final departure of Amaziah and his family, and the short absence of Zadok and Naomi. The priest had agreed to his brother's wish of hastening the journey, though he did not acknowledge the necessity for it, or believe that there was any cause for apprehension. He did not partake in his son's fanatical views, or consider that the cause of religion would be advanced by cruelty and persecution. It was well known that he was devoted to the Jewish faith, and that he firmly believed there was no salvation for any who departed from it: but it was also well known that his soul was full of mercy and compassion, and that he would not injure those whom he considered to be in a state of perdition already, and therefore Javan and his colleagues never confided their schemes against the Nazarenes to him. His violent anger at the discovery of his daughter's conversion to

Christianity had subsided into a milder feeling of disappointed love and sorrow. He could not continue to treat with harshness the affectionate and dutiful child, who had always been the object of his pride and hopes, and who now sought by every means in her power to win back his love and merit his approbation. The one only subject on which she refused to listen to his authority, was her new religion; and on that subject she always replied to him with such gentleness and humility, and yet with such a holy zeal and firmness, that he was constrained to admire even while he sharply rebuked her. She had been restored to her accustomed place in the family on the return of Javan, and had gradually resumed much of her influence over her parents. In all customs and ceremonies that were indifferent she conformed to the practice of her family, but in the retirement of her own chamber she followed the manner of worship which she had learned so highly to prize, and perused with untiring attention some portions of the Gospels, which she had copied while at Pella from the precious manuscripts possessed by some of her Christian brethren residing there. No alteration was perceptible to those who frequented the house, except that Naomi was more amiable, more obliging, and more gentle in her temper and disposition than formerly. The contemplation of her lovely character, which so beautifully reflected the graces of the Christian model, tended greatly to soften the severity of Zadok's prejudices against the Nazarenes; and for her sake he would have been unwilling to join in any act of oppression towards those whom she loved as her kindred, and more especially those who were united to her by the ties both of near relationship and a common faith. He rejoiced that his brother was about to remove from Jerusalem, for he hoped that when Naomi was left alone, and entirely deprived of the society of Christains, she would probably be induced to relinquish her

newly adopted opinions; and therefore he the more readily lent his aid to the hasty completion of the arrangements.

Mules and horse-litters were prepared, and a strong body of the domestic servants of both Zadok and Amaziah were furnished with arms, and appointed to act as guards to the party. A messenger was also dispatched to Joppa in search of Rufus, to request, if he were already there, that he would send the promised band of soldiers to meet them at Lydda on the day now fixed for their journey, instead of that more distant day which had been at first appointed. The baggage was all packed, and everything was ready; nothing remained but to bid farewell to Mary of Bethany, and consign her to the care of Benjamin.

Judith informed Zadok of their intention to visit their old and beloved friend on that evening, and earnestly requested that Naomi might be permitted to accompany them. She urged that it would be the last time that she should have it in her power to lead her niece to receive the blessing of that holy woman, which, whether she were a Jew or a Nazarene, could surely bring no evil on her head; and it would be a grief to Naomi if a friend whom she respected and loved so much were to die without her having seen her once more. The priest almost shuddered at the idea of his child receiving the benediction of one whom he knew to have been so devoted an attendant and disciple of Jesus of Nazareth; but he remembered that Naomi had already chosen her lot with his followers, and that one more interview with her former instructor could have no particular influence over her opinions. He therefore gave his consent, though unwillingly, and only on condition that Naomi should solemnly promise never again to make any attempt at seeing Mary after her return from Joppa.

Javan had absented himself from home nearly the whole day, to Naomi's great relief; and towards sunset

she joined her uncle and his family, and all together proceeded by the well-known path up the Mount of Olives towards Bethany. As a proper precaution in case of Javan's having actually discovered their intention, Amaziah took with him several well-armed servants, and he and Theophilus were furnished with swords and daggers. They arrived at the dwelling of their friend, and entered as they were accustomed to do, without knocking, leaving the armed domestics to watch at the entrance. The first objects that met their view filled them with apprehensions that the venerable saint had already departed, and that their farewell visit was too late. Hannah was kneeling by the couch on which Mary was laid; and as the door opened, she turned, and held up her finger in token of silence. The tears were rolling down her cheeks, and sorrow was strongly depicted in her countenance. Judith and Naomi stepped lightly and quickly to the bedside, and Hannah drew aside the curtain that shaded the dying Christian from the light of a lamp that was suspended from the ceiling. Then they saw that life was not yet extinct, but was ebbing gently and swiftly away. Judith beckoned to her husband, and he with his son and Claudia advanced, with noiseless steps, and they all stood silently to gaze on that form which they perceived would ere long be seen no more on earth Mary's eyes were closed, and the pallid hue of death was on her cheek. So motionless, so calm she lay, that but for the deep and heavy breathing and a slight movement of her parted lips, it might have seemed that she was already dead. But her spirit was conscious still, and she was praying at that moment that she might yet be spared to see her expected and well-beloved friends, and bless them before her death; yet her bodily senses were deadened, and she did not perceive that her prayer was already granted.

Presently she opened her eyes, and was casting an

anxious look towards the door, when she beheld all those she so ardently desired to see, standing around her, and in a weak and faltering voice she exclaimed, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace! My children, my beloved children in the Lord, this is a blessing that I had scarcely hoped for. The day has seemed long to me, for I knew that it must close ere my dying eyes could look on you; and I feared this heart would cease to beat before the time appointed for your coming. But the Lord who has supported and blessed me all my days, has heard my last request. Come near, that I may bless you all." They gathered closely round her, and knelt in reverential silence, while she moved her trembling hands, and laid them in succession on their heads.

"Oh, my Redeemer," she said, "thou who didst suffer death in all its agonies, that thou mightest take away its sting from those who believe in thee, in the hearing of these thy servants I would testify thy power to vanquish the last enemy, and make the dark valley of the shadow of death light and glorious by thy presence. Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation, and may the last words I utter bear witness to thy love. Bless with thy choicest blessings these thy children, whom thou hast called to the knowledge of thy name; and of thy great mercy keep them in the way of everlasting life. May their course in this world be happy, if it be for their eternal good. But if thou seest that trials and sorrows are needful for them, oh strengthen and support them, and make them more than conquerors over every temptation and every spiritual foe. And when their mortal race is run, and the crown of immortality is on their brow, may we meet and rejoice together around thy throne, and sing thy praise for evermore, for thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, and to thy name be all the glory!"

"Amen," replied the kneeling disciples with one heart

and one voice, while they bent their heads in deep devotion, and tears, which were not of sorrow, flowed from every eye.

At this moment a loud noise was heard near the entrance, as of armed men struggling to force open the door, and horrid imprecations were uttered against those who opposed them. Mary shuddered, and turned her dying eyes with intense anxiety to inquire the cause of this untimely violence, while Amaziah and Theophilus sprang on their feet, and drawing their swords prepared to resist the intrusion. It was a moment of awful suspense; but soon the door was burst open, and several men rushed in with swords and poniards, followed by the servants of Amaziah, who had vainly endeavoured to prevent their entrance. The spectacle that met their view was able to check the progress even of these ruffians—and they stood transfixed to the spot, looking with awe and admiration on the expiring saint, and the lovely girls who, with Judith and Hannah, still knelt by her side, and strove to overcome their own fears and support their sinking friend.

"Behold," said Amaziah, "the victim you come to seek: she is beyond the reach of human cruelty. Her spotless soul is winging its way to the presence of its God and Father, to bear testimony against those whose violence disturbed the last moments of its abode on earth."

"Say not so," murmured Mary faintly; "my dying voice shall plead for their pardon, in the words of Him who died for them, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!'"

A smile of pure benevolence and holy joy lighted up her countenance, and then faded away like the last rays of the setting sun on the cold surface of a wreath of snow. All was still—and friends and foes forgot for a moment all other feelings, in the contemplation of the awful change. Death looked beautiful on her placid

features, which were as calm as those of a sleeping infant.

"She is not dead, but sleepeth," said Amaziah, in a tone of deep solemnity. "May we die the death of the righteous, and may our last end be like hers!"

The evil intentions of the ruffian band had been checked, but not destroyed. The wonder and awe which had held them motionless had passed away; and again they grasped their weapons, and looked for orders towards their leaders. These were two powerful-looking men, in complete disguise, their faces being entirely concealed, and themselves clothed in an uncouth and foreign garb. They had not entered the apartment at the same time with their attendants, but remained at the entrance in conflict with some of Amaziah's servants, whom they succeeded in disarming, and then joined the rest of their band, as their intended victim uttered her last words of pious intercession.

One of these strangers turned away, and his manly form trembled for a moment with emotions that he sought to suppress; but the other called to his men in a stern voice to do their errand, and not be affrighted from their duty to God and man by the corpse of an accursed Nazarene. The impious appellation seemed to recall his comrade from his momentary weakness, and he rushed forward towards Theophilus with his sword uplifted, and already stained with blood from the conflict which had preceded his entrance. Claudia saw the fierce advance, and knew that it could be no other than Javan, who thus singled out her beloved Theophilus as the object of his rage. She forgot all other feelings in terror for the safety of him she loved, and springing forward, she placed herself before him, and cried:

"Javan, if blood be your object, shed mine: I am a Roman maid, allied to your bitterest enemies. But seek not to take the life of your countryman, your relative, and the ornament of your house."

The stranger was startled, but he spoke not. He wished not to confirm the suspicions of Claudia, by letting her hear his voice, but seizing her arm, he flung her aside; and as Theophilus caught her and prevented her from falling to the ground, he aimed a blow at his shoulder, and inflicted a wound that entirely disabled him. The blood flowed over the dress of Claudia, and all her sudden courage forsook her. She fainted away, and Theophilus was forced to relinquish her to the care of Naomi, and endeavour feebly to defend himself from the assaults of Javan. Meanwhile the chamber of death had become the scene of a furious conflict. The servants of Amaziah fought valiantly against a superior force, to defend their master and his family; while their foes endeavoured to secure them captives, and not to take their lives. Amaziah and Theophilus loudly called on the women to escape from the house by the back entrance, while they kept the assailants at bay; but Claudia's helpless condition, and anxiety for the fate of their defenders, kept them in the room. They stood by the bed of the lifeless Mary, on which they had laid Claudia also, now apparently as inanimate as their departed friend, and utterly unconscious of all that was going on around her. Perhaps it was well for her that she was so, though she only awaked to a sense of utter misery.

The attacks of Javan and his comrade were evidently directed principally towards Theophilus; and at length while his father and the servants were occupied with the rest of the band, they succeeded in securing him, exhausted as he was with exertion and loss of blood. They hastily bound him with a strong rope, and endeavoured to drag him from the house by the back entrance, near which they had seized and overpowered him; but Naomi saw their intent, and loudly calling to her uncle for aid she flew to her cousin, and rendered desperate by excitement and alarm, she employed her strength so well as to

impede the design of Javan, and enable Amaziah to come to the rescue Judith and Hannah stood in the way, and sought to close and bolt the door; but what could the efforts of weak and terrified women avail against the power and resolution of a band of armed and cruel men? Several of Amaziah's servants were wounded, and those who were not disabled could no longer maintain the unequal contest. They saw that their master was in danger of being made a prisoner as well as Theophilus, and they exerted all their courage and strength for his preservation and that of his son. The struggle was violent and well maintained; but alas! the faithful domestics only succeeded in disengaging Amaziah from the grasp of the ruffians, and Theophilus was borne away. His father would have followed the retreating steps of the ruffians, but his servants forcibly detained him, as they were convinced that such an attempt would only lead to his own capture; and in grief and horror the afflicted family stood by the corpse of Mary and the senseless form of Claudia, to consider what steps should be taken for the safety of the unhappy Theophilus.

To hasten back to the city, and employ all their influence with Zadok and his powerful friends, was the first impulse; but what could they do with Claudia, in her present helpless state, or how should they inform her of the calamity which had befallen them all? While they prepared some rude contrivance to carry her with them, she revived, and her first words were to inquire for Theophilus.

"He is gone to the city, my daughter," replied Judith; "and there I hope we shall soon see him safe and free."

"But he was wounded," said Claudia, confusedly: "I felt the warm blood flow on my cheek. Why is he gone away? he would not have left me senseless. But I remember now—oh, the dreadful truth comes over

my brain! Javan has forced him away, and Javan will destroy him. I always knew that he would bring desolation into my heart; and it is done!"

A flood of tears somewhat relieved her bursting grief, and then she wildly sprang up, and cried,

"But why do we tarry here? Come, Naomi, we will fly to the city, and with my dear adopted parents, we will kneel and weep at Javan's feet until we melt even his heart of stone. Farewell, dear sainted Mary! It is well that your eyes were closed in death before this blow fell on those you loved so much—and oh! if my eyes are not again to behold Theophilus, I would that they had never opened from the trance that spared me the sight of his defeat!"

Thus passionately did the unhappy girl give vent to her feelings; and to her disposition it was a relief to do so. Meanwhile Amaziah gave some hasty directions to Hannah concerning the burial of the deceased, and promised to send some of his domestics, who were of the same holy religion, to assist her in performing it as secretly as possible at break of day, and if possible to attend himself. He feared that the priests might hear of her death, and send to seize on her corpse, that they might bury it according to their own ceremonies; and therefore he desired two of the servants who had attended him that evening to remain with Hannah, and prepare a humble grave for her beloved mistress, in the large and well-planted garden belonging to the house. He further desired Hannah to linger no longer in that dwelling, after the last duties had been paid to Mary, but to accompany his servants to Jerusalem, and take up her abode with him and his family, until his son could be liberated, when she should travel with them to Ephesus, and find a refuge and a home wherever they should dwell.

The afflicted family then left the house, and by the light of the torches with which they were provided, they

bent their way towards the city. They were startled on entering the public road to perceive a band of men, also carrying lighted torches, approaching towards them, and for a moment they supposed that it was Javan returning to make a fresh attack; but the voice of their friend Benjamin speedily reassured them, and they hastened to communicate to him the death of Mary, and the subsequent calamitous event. It was now no longer necessary for the kind-hearted Benjamin to proceed to Mary's house, and he therefore insisted on joining his body of attendants to that of Amaziah, and conducting him and his family safe to their home; and in the litter which had been destined to carry the departed Christian, he placed Claudia, whose weakness made her almost incapable of proceeding on foot. Naomi and Judith walked beside her, and sought by every argument they could find to calm her agitation, and persuade her that there was every reason to hope for the speedy relief of Theophilus. Perhaps they appeared more sanguine than they really felt; but they could hardly believe that if it had actually been Javan who had thus deprived his cousin of liberty, he would refuse to listen to the entreaties of his family, or to be moved by the sorrow which he had brought upon them. It seemed too cruel even for Javan, to deliver his kinsman into the hands of those who would count his murder a meritorious act; and therefore they tried to believe that he only intended to detain them all in Jerusalem, until he had further ascertained their conversion to Christianity, and endeavoured to shake their faith by his arguments, and perhaps his threats.

They entered the city without difficulty, by means of the private gate, and were passing up the dark and narrow lane which led to the offices of Zadok's house, when they saw a wild and haggard form approaching at a rapid pace under the shadow of the wall. It was the son of Ananus—that mysterious being who had not ceased to traverse the devoted city day and night ever

since its peace and prosperity began to fail. His ghastly countenance and sad and hollow voice could not be mistaken. He advanced close to the litter on which the terrified Claudia was carried, and uttered loudly his oft-repeated burden of woe.

"A voice from the east! a voice from the west! a voice from the four winds! a voice against Jerusalem and against the temple!"—Then pointing his skeleton finger towards Claudia, he uttered in a still more dismal tone, "A voice against the bridegrooms and the brides —a voice against the whole people!"

Swiftly he passed on, and was out of sight; while the same boding cry was heard repeated in the distance. But not so swiftly did the feelings of terror which he had excited in the breast of Claudia subside. Her mind had always been inclined to superstition; and though she strove to banish the impression that was made by the denunciation of the wild prophet, yet it sounded continually in her ears as the knell of all her earthly hopes.

The sad party reached their home, and immediately proceeded to the apartment generally occupied by Zadok and his family; and there, to their utter astonishment, they found Javan, in the usual loose robe in which he pursued his studies, deeply occupied in transcribing some portions of the sacred Talmud. Zadok and Salome, and their guest, the beautiful Mary of Bethezob, were also engaged in their ordinary employments; and all appeared equally startled and surprised at the entrance of their relatives in a manner so unexpected, and with countenances expressive of so much grief and anxiety.

Javan was the first to inquire, in a tone of perfect unconsciousness, into the cause of their distress; and so well did he feign ignorance and sympathy, that they began to doubt whether it was indeed he whom they had so lately seen under such different circumstances,

and wearing so different an aspect. Naomi and Claudia fixed their eyes searchingly upon his countenance, while Amaziah related to his brother the particulars of all that had occurred to them, but they could read nothing in Javan's features to confirm their suspicions of his guilt. He betrayed no emotion, but affected sorrow and surprise; and so readily offered his assistance in discovering the authors of the deed, that his parents never thought of ascribing it to him, though the rest of his relatives were still doubtful and suspicious.

Having acted his hypocritical part with perfect coolness, Javan left the house on the pretence of making instant inquiries concerning the fate of Theophilus; and with a promise to return as soon as he had obtained any intelligence. He was no sooner gone than Claudia—who had hitherto with difficulty restrained herself from charging him with his duplicity and cruelty—declared to Zadok and Salome her firm conviction that their son was the cause of the sorrow which had come upon them; and not only that the barbarous scheme had originated with him, but that he had been present in disguise to put it in execution.

"He had a companion who also concealed his face, and wore the garb of a stranger," she added, "but his voice seemed to be one that I had often heard."

The daughter of Eleazar was present, and for her sake Claudia forbore to say that she believed Isaac to be the accomplice of Javan; but she had no doubt on the subject, and she was right in her conjecture.

Both Zadok and Salome strongly opposed the idea that Javan could be guilty of an act of such cruelty towards a near kinsman; but when they heard the various reasons which existed for suspecting him, and were informed of the listener who had been observed in Mary's garden, they began to entertain the same opinion, and promised to exert all their influence and authority to induce him to repair the injury he had done, and

restore his family to happiness again. The lady of Bethezob listened with interest and astonishment to the conversation of her friends, for until that moment she had not known that she had been associating with Nazarenes. It is true she had seen very little of Amaziah and his family: but with Naomi she had lived on terms of intimacy, and for her she entertained a great affection. The idea of any longer concealing from Javan that his sister had embraced Christianity was laid aside, for all were equally convinced that he already knew it; and therefore Mary's presence was no check to the freedom of the discourse, and her inquiries were satisfied by a plain statement of the fact, and an injunction that she would observe a perfect secrecy on the subject towards all but the inmates of the house. She was a kind-hearted woman when her natural feelings were not biassed by passion or prejudice, and her sympathy was warmly excited both towards Naomi and Claudia. She wondered at their religious infatuation, for in her mind that all-important subject was a matter of taste and feeling, and not of deep principle and absorbing interest; yet she grieved for their afflictions, and those of the bereaved parents, and would gladly have lent her aid to remove them. All that wealth could do she cheerfully offered; but Claudia hoped more from her influence with Isaac, when it should appear that he was concerned in the unhappy business, than from the power of her riches. Indeed from this hope she derived her greatest and almost her only comfort; for when she saw how kindly Mary espoused her cause, and how eagerly she proffered her assistance, she began to feel that all was not yet lost, and that through her means the liberty of Theophilus might possibly be obtained.

It was late when Javan re-entered the house, and he attributed his long absence to the difficulty he had found in tracing the lost Theophilus.

"At length," he added, "I have been successful; but

I regret to say that he has not fallen into the hands of the Zealots or the Idumeans, who might be induced to restore him on the payment of a large ransom; but he has been seized by the arm of justice. His criminal apostasy has been discovered to some of our most holy and zealous priests; and their righteous indignation has led them to take this step as a salutary warning to others who may be inclined to the same heresy, and as a wise precaution to prevent his disseminating the errors which have perverted his mind. I grieve for his fate, but it was only what I dreaded would be the result of his folly."

"Javan," cried Claudia, "it is you who have betrayed him! None but you and Rabbi Joazer were acquainted with his opinions; and the Rabbi had sworn to Zadok that he would never reveal them. You have brought all this evil on your house, and now you seek to hide your cruelty under the mask of sorrow."

"Silence, Claudia!" replied Javan indignantly; "and remember that though I cast back your passionate accusations with contempt, yet I have power and influence which it would be your wiser course to conciliate by submission, and not thus by your unfounded taunts to provoke me to use them against the object of your affection. But I act from higher motives than personal love or hatred; and I shall pursue the course which I see to be for the real good of my cousin, and the honour of my family, without any regard to the ravings of a heathen girl."

Claudia shrunk away from the look of fierce determination with which Javan accompanied this rebuke. She feared that by her unguarded exclamations she had only exasperated him still more against both Theophilus and herself; and she resolved in future to restrain her feelings, and if possible to conceal from him her horror and dread of his character, and the personal dislike which she had always felt for him. She could not reply to

him, for her heart was too full; but Naomi approached him, and in a gentle voice endeavoured to move him to better feelings.

"My brother," she said, "do not speak thus harshly to Claudia. She is overwhelmed with grief, and knows not what she utters; and you should pity rather than blame her. You say that you have power and influence over those who have carried off our unfortunate cousin. Will you not exert them in his favour? He is your near kinsman—he never injured you. He formed the happiness of his parents, and of my poor Claudia too; and his character was never sullied by an act that could reflect shame on his family. What though he now differs from you in his religious opinions? That is a matter between him and his God, whom he serves in sincerity; and before whom he must stand or fall. O Javan, join not with those who seek his life; but restore him—for I know you can—to those whose life is bound up in his life, and let not the grey hairs of your father's brother be brought down to the grave in sorrow."

As Naomi finished speaking, she laid her hand on her brother's arm, and looked into his countenance with a look of moving entreaty; her mother, with Judith, Claudia, and Mary, had gathered round her, and with eloquent gestures joined their supplications to hers. But Javan turned on her a look of scorn, and shaking off her gentle hand, he exclaimed,

"Well may you plead for the life and liberty of an apostate!—for the same blasphemous creed that has marked him for eternal shame has branded you also! I know it all, Naomi. Your guilt, your hypocrisy, are all revealed. And here, in the presence of your parents, I denounce you as a Nazarene. Nay, cling not to me, and look not so imploringly,"—and Javan turned away his face that he might not meet his sister's sweet and tearful eyes,—"I am not going to give you up to the arm of justice. Cruel as I know you think me, I will

not give your body to be mangled by the executioner. For our parents' sake I spare you this; and because I believe the power of the Lord God will yet be sent to cast forth the evil spirit that now possesses you, and make you again what once you were. But till that time arrives I renounce you as a sister; and I leave it to your father, to the just, the righteous Zadok, to take such steps as may speedily wipe away this stain, and remove the pollution from our house!"

Javan looked with astonishment at Zadok and Salome. He expected to have seen surprise and horror depicted in their countenances at the disclosure which he had just made; but sorrow mingled with pity was the only emotion they betrayed.

Naomi was about to reply to her brother, but Zadok interrupted her.

"Javan," he said, in a tone of calm authority, "the error into which your sister has unhappily fallen, has long been known both to your mother and me. It has been the source of profound grief to us; and many have been the prayers which we have offered up before the throne of the Almighty that he would vouchsafe to restore her to the true faith. Hitherto, alas! no answer has been given, and her soul is still in darkness. Why should we have told our sorrow and our shame to you, my son! We knew your zeal for the Lord, and we knew the anguish it would give you to find that Naomi, your only sister, had been beguiled from the way of holiness and truth to follow this new and most accursed heresy. Therefore we have concealed it from you and from the world; and, Javan, as your father, I now command you to follow the same course. Use all your efforts, all your prayers to bring her back; but breathe not her disgrace in any human ear. I would not have her despised; and, oh! for worlds I would not have her fall into the power of my zealous, but hard-hearted brethren. She is my child, my most beloved daughter-

and though my heart condemns her, yet there she shall find a refuge, even though all the powers of earth and hell were combined together to tear her from me!"

Zadok adored his daughter; and this burst of parental feeling was excited by the sudden fear and horror to which Javan's words had given rise. The thought of his lovely Naomi being consigned to death and ignominy, as an apostate and blasphemer, had roused up all the tenderness which he had partially concealed, but could not banish, ever since the discovery of her lamented change of religion. She turned in grateful astonishment at this unexpected expression of his love, and falling at his feet, she would have kissed the hem of his garment; but he raised her up and embraced her with all his former affection, while he uttered a benediction which had not gladdened her heart since the time when first she had offended him, and rebelled against his authority.

Even Javan was moved, and Amaziah seized the moment to appeal to him.

"Behold, Javan," he said, "what is the love that a father has for his child! Our son is as dear to us as your sweet sister is to her parents. Judge then what must be our feelings while we know that Theophilus is in the power of his enemies—of those who would rejoice to shed his blood, and think that by so doing they should offer up a sacrifice acceptable to the God of mercy. Your power is great—your talents are respected by those on whom I believe his fate depends. Listen then to the entreaties of your family, and show that you are indeed zealous for the honour of God, by imitating Him who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness."

"Amaziah," replied Javan, "I am not insensible to the feelings of nature and humanity. I delight not in seeing the affliction of others; and if I could terminate your anxiety, and procure the liberation of Theophilus without compromising my well-known and declared

opinions, and countenancing a heresy which my soul abhors, I would gladly do so. But the pure faith which has descended to me unsullied from our father Abraham is dearer to me than any considerations of a personal nature. Your son is an apostate. He has cast off the God of his fathers, and gives to a creature, a mere man, the honour which belongs to Jehovah alone. Therefore is he cut off from his family and his nation—nay more, he is wiped away from the book of life, and consigned to perdition. And shall I—a son of Aaron—lend my aid to rescue him from the punishment which he so well has earned? Shall I be the means of setting him at liberty, to disseminate his accursed doctrines, and carry the same spiritual pestilence into other families that he has brought into his own? No! by the altar of God I swear that so long as he cleaves to his idolatry, so long may he pine in a dungeon; or, if his judges see fit, he may be torn limb from limb, and given to be meat for the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field. But let him renounce his errors, and seek the pardon of his offended God by confession and sacrifice, and I will procure his release. Amaziah, look to your own safety. You have narrowly escaped sharing the same fate as your son; and I warn you to abjure your heresy, or to flee at once from the city. Judith and Claudia are known and marked as Nazarenes; and Naomi too is suspected. I have power to shelter her at present; but even that may fail, and my sister may be seized on and offered as a sacrifice to appease the wrath of insulted Heaven! O God of Jacob! what woes have been brought on thy peculiar people by the impostures of the crucified carpenter's son."

Javan left the room, and retired with hasty steps to the terrace, where he remained a great part of the night, pacing to and fro, and revolving many anxious thoughts. All his better feelings had been excited by the scene which he had just witnessed, and it was only by recalling

to his mind the sentiments of severe fanaticism that generally reigned there, that he had been enabled to banish the rising emotions of tenderness and compassion. But now he had checked what he considered a weakness. Bigotry and mistaken zeal resumed possession of his soul, and all his thoughts were directed to the paramount object of bringing back his cousin to Judaism, or making him a fearful example of vengeance, as a warning to Naomi, to Amaziah, and to all who were in like manner perverted.

He left his family in sorrow and dismay. Those who adored Jesus of Nazareth as their Saviour, and worshipped him as God, were filled with horror and indignation at hearing his holy name blasphemed; and all were overpowered with the conviction that no hope remained of the liberation of Theophilus. Zadok endeavoured to speak comfort to his afflicted relatives, by urging them to use their influence in persuading his nephew to renounce Christianity; but Amaziah bade him cease such dreadful suggestions, and declared, while tears of deep emotion flowed down his manly cheeks, that he would rather behold his son—his only and beloved son—given up to the worst tortures that the spirit of persecution had ever yet devised, than hear him by one word deny the Lord who bought him with his own blood.

No one ventured to raise their voice in opposition to this declaration of the afflicted but undaunted father, and with heavy hearts the family dispersed to seek such repose as their sorrows would permit.

CHAPTER XV.

The sun rose bright and cheerful on the morrow—that day so ardently desired by Claudia, as the day of her departure from Jerusalem, and the termination of all her fears and anxieties. But it proved a day of trouble and sorrow, and brought with it no comfort, no hope.

Soon after the morning broke, poor Hannah arrived from Bethany, with the servants who had assisted her in depositing the remains of the departed Mary in the hasty grave which they had prepared for her. Amaziah had also performed his promise of being present, if possible, on the occasion; and notwithstanding the grief which oppressed him, and the danger to which he exposed himself by attending the burial of a Christian, he had in the darkness of night returned to Bethany, and pronounced a funeral benediction over his revered and beloved friend. Then he hastened back to the city, and was followed shortly afterwards by the weeping Hannah and his own domestics, who carried with them all the little property which had been bequeathed to her by her mistress. One treasure the faithful servant bore herself, and that was the roll of parchment that contained the writings of St. Matthew. Mary had desired her to give it to Naomi, with her dying love and blessing, when she believed that she was sinking, and should not live to see her face on that sad night which had left such traces of sorrow on the hearts of all those who came to bid her farewell. Naomi received the gift with grateful joy, and carefully concealed it from every eye. It was

a possession which she had long and earnestly coveted, and she thanked her Heavenly Father for thus mercifully providing her with the rich consolation of the inspired Gospel history, at the very time when she expected so soon to be deprived of all human support and human instruction. For the present all the plans for the departure of Amaziah and his family were laid aside. No fears for their own safety could induce them to leave the city while Theophilus remained a captive; but everything was held in readiness for the journey, at any moment when they could obtain his freedom.

The day was passed in various and ineffectual efforts to interest the chief priests and other leading men in his behalf. Even Zadok, the zealous and devoted priest, so distinguished for his own strict observance of the law, was seen a suppliant for the pardon of the Nazarene youth; but no concession was obtained, further than a promise that he should be examined concerning his faith; and that no steps should be taken against him until he was proved to be guilty. And even then, if he would acknowledge his error, and publicly renounce it, he should, in consideration of his uncle's virtues, and the respect which was entertained for him, be liberated, and suffered to leave the country. Mary was not unmindful of her promise to exert her influence with Isaac, and had his heart been less hard and his prejudices less violent, her tears and entreaties must have prevailed. He was president of the self-elected council, on whose decree hung the life or death of all who were seized on suspicion of heresy, and consequently his judgment would greatly affect the result of the trial. But he was a bloodthirsty and impenetrable man, with whom power and riches and political ascendancy were the only objects of life. It was to forward these views, and obtain these objects, that he had stooped to seek the favour of the rich and beautiful Mary; and it was the fear of losing them that alone made him listen to her arguments with patience,

and affect to reply to them with candour and gentleness. He deceived her into the belief that he would be Theophilus's friend, and with sincere joy she reported her imagined success to Claudia, whose spirits rose with greater elasticity than those of Naomi. Her judgment was less correct than that of her friend, and her spirit more volatile; and while Naomi rejoiced to see her cherishing these hopes, she herself did not dare to entertain them.

The day of trial arrived; and Zadok, in virtue of his priestly office, obtained admission to the council-chamber. It would not have been prudent, even had it been possible, for Amaziah to be present; and he remained with his anxious and almost despairing wife, and the kind and sympathising Salome. Claudia's agitation during these hours of agonizing suspense amounted almost to distraction. She wandered about the house and garden in restless impatience, followed always by her gentle and strong-minded friend, who soothed her irritation, checked her unfounded and sudden hopes, and again supported and cheered her when sinking to despair.

At length the voice of Zadok was heard in the vestibule; and all hastened to meet him, and read in his countenance the destruction or the confirmation of all their hopes. Claudia sprang towards him, and sank at his knees, in such an imploring attitude as if she were pleading to him for the life of her beloved Theophilus.

"Speak, Zadok!" she cried, "tell me if——"

She could not finish the sentence. She could not ask whether he who was so dear to her was condemned to death. Zadok looked on her with pity, and replied:—

"Do not abandon yourself to despair, dear Claudia. Theophilus, indeed, is not acquitted; we could not anticipate that. But no sentence of condemnation is yet pronounced, and time is given him. His sentiments may change, or we may yet work on his judges to release

him, and banish him from the country. Believe me, all that I can do in his favour shall be done."

The latter part of the sentence was lost on Claudia. She saw that the fate of Theophilus was sealed, for it depended on his adherence to his religion, which she knew that nothing would ever shake. The dreadful conviction rushed upon her mind that she should never again behold him, and her senses forsook her. Sympathy for her misery diverted the attention of her sorrowing friends; but they all felt a sickening dread of what must follow, and envied the unconsciousness of Claudia. But she soon returned to a sense of the blow which had stunned her, and none could speak comfort to her breaking heart. The parents of Theophilus supported their affliction with more calmness; but it was not less deeply felt. They had learned to look on sorrow as a necessary ingredient in the cup of life, and they could meekly bow to the dispensation of their Heavenly Father, knowing that every event was in his hand, and that their enemies could do nothing but what was overruled and ordained by Him. But sorrow was not forbidden them, and deeply they grieved for the apprehended loss of their amiable and well-beloved son. Javan was present at the council, but he had not on this occasion taken his seat as one of the members. He wished to appear impartial, and forbore to take any part in the trial of his relative; but Isaac knew his sentiments, and there was no fear that either he or any of the counsellors would be too lenient. The prisoner was brought forth to answer to the charge made against him, and accused of heresy and idolatry. He replied with firmness and eloquence, and admirably did he set forth and maintain the blessed doctrines of Christianity. He completely denied all the evil tendency with which those doctrines were charged, and indignantly repelled the foul accusation of idolatry; but openly professed himself a disciple of the despised Jesus, and exulted in

the name of Nazarene. His judges were astonished at his boldness, but it only made them more resolved to destroy one who could so powerfully plead the cause of the religion which they hated.

All were unanimous in their opinion that Theophilus was worthy of death, and had it not been for the urgent and powerful entreaties of Zadok, the fatal sentence would have been pronounced upon him immediately. But his uncle's intercessions obtained for him a reprieve of one week, during which time he promised to use all his efforts to induce him to renounce Christianity. Should he be successful, the full acquittal of the prisoner was pledged; but if Theophilus proved obdurate, even Zadok's influence must fail to procure any mercy for him. Isaac affected to plead for him, that a longer delay might be granted, but it was with so little warmth, that it was evident his words were contrary to his wishes, and the undaunted prisoner saw that his fate was sealed. He was remanded to the dungeon from whence he had been brought; but ere he retired Zadok approached him, and embraced him with the greatest affection. He whispered to him words of hope, which sank unheeded on the ear of Theophilus, for he knew that hope was gone in this world, and all he sought was heavenly strength to support him to the last.

"The Lord be merciful to you, my son," said Zadok, "and give you understanding and power to employ the short period of trial which is granted you, in repenting of your errors and returning to the truth. I will visit you daily, and I will supply you with all the holy writings which are calculated to remove the unhappy errors into which, through the wiles of Satan, you have fallen. Now I must hasten home, and tell your anxious friends that yet there is hope, and that it rests with yourself to pronounce the word that shall restore you to them and to liberty."

"Nay, dear uncle," replied Theophilus, "do not seek

to deceive my parents. Tell them not to fear that their son will act the part of a hypocrite——"

"Cease, Theophilus," interrupted Zadok, "you will be overheard by those who will misinterpret your words. Farewell. I will say to Claudia that she may yet be happy. For her sake consider, and be wise."

Theophilus shook his head mournfully. The name of Claudia had pierced his heart, but it had not shaken his resolution; and he steadily followed his guards, who now came to conduct him to his cell. Javan did not accompany his father home. He dreaded to meet the reproaches of Claudia and his relatives, and he therefore allowed Zadok to carry to them the tidings of what had occurred. He knew that the part which he had taken in his cousin's apprehension was more than suspected by his family, though he had not acknowledged it, and therefore he felt himself to be the object of their just indignation. He also wished to avoid beholding the sorrow which he had brought on them, lest it should shake his purpose; and he thought himself bound in conscience to show no mercy to a Nazarene, unless he would abjure his creed. He would have rejoiced if Theophilus could thus have been brought to a public recantation; but he did not hope it, for there was something in his cousin's character, and in his demeanour during the trial, that told him he would defy death rather than renounce his opinions. Zadok was far more sanguine. He hoped everything from his own efforts to convince his nephew of his folly, especially when every feeling of the prisoner's heart would plead so powerfully in support of his arguments; and therefore he persisted in speaking cheerfully to his afflicted family, and vainly trying to inspire them with hopes which none but himself entertained.

Mary had eagerly inquired what part Isaac had taken during the trial, and whether he had performed his promise of befriending Theophilus. She was ill satisfied with the replies of Zadok; and when the president

visited her on the following day, she reproached him sharply for not having acted more decidedly. Isaac was irritated, but he dared not show his anger, for he knew the quick and ungovernable feelings of Mary, and while so much which was important to him hung on her favour, he thought it wiser to conciliate her by fresh assurances and unmeaning professions.

The lady of Bethezob had taken up the cause of Theophilus, and she was resolved not to abandon it. She told Isaac that she knew it would be in his power to procure his liberation, and that if he did not give her that proof of his affection, she would break off her engagement altogether, and never see him more. Her will had always been a law to those around her, and she would never unite herself to a man who refused to comply with so reasonable, so humane a request. The counsellor was greatly alarmed at this declaration, which threatened the demolition of all his covetous projects, and the disappointment of all his schemes, which were founded on the hope of possessing Mary's wealth. He therefore began seriously to consider whether it would not be his more prudent plan to sacrifice the desire of adding another victim to those who were so soon to seal their faith with their blood; and by obtaining the pardon of Theophilus, to secure to himself the hand and the rich heritage of the widow of Bethezob. His selfish cupidity came in the stead of more generous feelings to make him act the part of a friend towards Theophilus, and he left Mary with a solemn oath that he would not rest until he had accomplished all that she desired.

Isaac hastened from the presence of his betrothed to seek Javan, and immediately informed him of the warm interest which Mary took in the fate of the prisoner, and her positive assertion that the union which he so greatly desired, should depend on the result of his efforts to release him. The counsellor had not doubted that his

friend would sympathise in his feelings, and gladly join in any measures that would bring the wealth of Eleazar's daughter into the power of one of his own partisans, and thus forward his grand object of bringing Simon to take the command of the city. But Isaac judged of Javan by himself, and therefore he was mistaken. Javan was a zealous Pharisee and a furious bigot; but in all his conduct, however blamable, he was actuated by what he called religious principle. Self-interest had little weight with him; and though he would have shed the blood of thousands to promote the imaginary honour of God or the glory of his beloved country, he would have scorned to act contrary to the dictates of his conscience to further the personal views either of himself or his friends, and therefore he would not for a moment listen to the suggestions of Isaac. If his own feelings of dislike towards Theophilus had incited him to greater eagerness in seeking his apprehension, he was hardly aware of it himself; and he believed that he was guided by holy zeal for the cause of religion, and the preservation of his family from shame and dishonour. And now that his cousin was a captive, and shut up from the power of disseminating his creed, and also from the possibility of contracting an alliance with a heathen, was it to be expected that he would seek to liberate him, merely to promote the aggrandizement of an individual friend? He spurned the idea, and assured Isaac that nothing but Theophilus's recantation of all his errors would induce him to plead for his pardon; and therefore if such merciful projects now filled his breast, the only way to accomplish them would be to persuade the heretic to return to the true faith, which he feared would never be effected.

This was almost a deathblow to Isaac's hopes, but all his reiterated arguments were unable to shake the stern resolve of Javan; and he proceeded to try whether he could exert more influence over others of the council,

and thus bring a majority to adopt his views. With a very few he prevailed, by promised bribes, so far as to obtain a promise that they would not consent to the death of Theophilus; but the rest were too much in Javan's interest, and also too much exasperated against the Nazarenes, to feel any inclination to forego their cruel purpose out of regard to Isaac.

The days passed rapidly away, and the period appointed for the decision of the fate of Theophilus was almost expired. The morrow would be the eventful day; and all the inmates of Zadok's house were absorbed in anxiety and grief. Zadok had visited his nephew constantly, and spent hours in long and patient argument with him, but all in vain. Each evening he returned harassed and distressed; and again each day he set forth with renewed hopes of success in his work of mercy. Amaziah would have persuaded him to forbear his visits, for he knew that his faithful and beloved son would regret that his remaining days should thus be interrupted, and his own pious meditations thus broken in upon. He did not fear that Theophilus would be influenced in the least degree by all that Zadok might urge upon him, for he knew that his faith was strong, and was founded on the Rock of Ages; and therefore all his hopes for the life of his son had expired from the moment that he heard the conditions which had been proposed to him. Yet he still wept and prayed before the Lord, with his afflicted wife and family; for he said, "Who can tell whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that my son may live?" It was from God, and not from man, that he ventured to look for aid; and it was only in accordance with his will that he wished to obtain it. Better far, he knew it would be, that his only son should "depart and be with the Lord," than that by sinfully denying him, he should obtain a prolongation of his earthly life, and lose the life eternal. Judith had grace and strength vouchsafed her to join in all her

pious and high-minded husband's feelings; but Claudia, the poor heart-broken Claudia, was tossed to and fro by contending and most afflicting emotions. Sorely was she tempted and tried; and her faith almost gave way. Could it be true religion, she thought, which thus brought its professors into such straits and sorrows? Could it be true religion that demanded the sacrifice of one so good, so valuable as Theophilus, and led him to choose shame and death, and to leave those whose happiness was bound up in him to hopeless misery and desolation? Why should he not speak the word, and return to bless her with his presence? The Father Almighty had been the author of Judaism, and why should Theophilus die an ignominious death, rather than return to the religion in which he had been brought up? Weak and inefficient as these reasonings were, they had power to agitate the mind of Claudia, enfeebled by sorrow and anxiety. Her better feelings told her that such thoughts were both sinful and irrational; and yet she could not entirely conquer them, or still the repinings of her bursting heart. To Naomi she dared not breathe such doubts, for she felt how they would be condemned by her stronger-minded and more devoted friend; but to Salome she expressed her feelings, and even ventured to propose that she should herself address a letter to Theophilus, and send it by the hand of Zadok when he paid him his last visit that evening. She knew the power which she possessed over his affections, and she deceived herself into believing that she was right in employing it for the preservation of his life.

Salome gladly heard her express this wish, and hastened to communicate it to her husband, who warmly approved the plan, and urged Claudia to omit no persuasions which might possibly work on the feelings of Theophilus, and induce him to abandon his present determination to brave the worst that the council could threaten, rather than deny his belief in the Nazarene.

With renewed hopes but with a trembling hand, the mistaken girl sat down to address her unhappy Theophilus. Carried away by her own feelings, she suffered herself to become an instrument in the hand of Satan, to tempt the being whom she loved so devotedly to sacrifice his immortal soul for the sake of dwelling a few short years with her on earth! How does the father of lies ofttimes transform himself into an angel of light, and beguile the hearts and understandings of those who do not resist his first whispers, to believe that they are doing God's work, when all the while they are seconding the efforts of his arch-enemy!

Claudia was long in composing her letter. What words could she find sufficiently eloquent to plead with Theophilus for his own life? At length it was finished; and many were the tears which fell on the parchment, and blotted out the words as soon as they were inscribed; but these tears would speak to the heart of him whom she addressed more powerfully than anything she could write: and the epistle was rolled up and carefully secured with a silken cord and a seal. She breathed a prayer for its success as she delivered it into the hand of Zadok: but at that moment the voice of conscience spoke loudly to her heart, and she felt a pang of doubt and fear whether she had acted the part of a servant of God, and whether the object of all her affections would not despise her for her weakness. She trembled with nervous indecision, and whilst she paused and hesitated whether to recall the important letter, Zadok passed quickly from the house, and it was too late. Did she not experience a momentary joy that it was no longer in her power to prevent the manuscript from reaching the hand and eye of Theophilus? She did; but her satisfaction was succeeded quickly by such agonising feelings of remorse and dread that she could hardly support them. Salome could now be no comfort to her, for she could not sympathise in the self-reproach

which so suddenly overpowered her, as the conviction pressed upon her mind that she had been a traitor to the "Lord who bought her," and had endeavoured to draw Theophilus into the same dreadful crime. Mary of Bethezob ridiculed her fears, and would have repeated all the arguments by which poor Claudia had persuaded herself to commit the deed which she now so deeply repented; but she would not listen to her—her eyes were opened to a sense of her sin and weakness, and she saw the fallacy of all her reasonings, and the selfishness which had led her to prefer her own happiness to the salvation of her beloved Theophilus. She would listen no longer to the voice of the tempter, but hurried away to search for Naomi, and unburden her oppressed heart to that judicious and most faithful friend. She found her with Judith engaged in humble and fervent prayer for the object of their anxiety; and oh! how was her spirit pierced, and what shame and sorrow did she feel, as she entered the chamber, and heard the concluding words of supplication uttered by Naomi, in a tone of the deepest feeling and most perfect resignation!—". . . . . And oh! most gracious Lord, while, in submission to thy will, we humbly implore thee to look upon our sorrow and turn it into joy, we would yet more earnestly desire that thou wouldst be with the soul of our beloved and afflicted brother, to strengthen him against the temptations that may sorely beset him in this hour of trial. May no fear of death, no thoughts of early affections intrude to weaken his holy resolution, or shake his faith in thee, Lord Jesus. Thou hast called him to thyself. Oh! uphold him with thy right hand, that his footsteps slide not; and whether in life or in death, may he glorify thee, and confess thy name; that so, if thou seest fit to take him from us here, it may be our blessed privilege to meet him again before thy throne, as one who has confessed thee before men, and whom thou wilt confess before thy Father in heaven."

"Amen, amen," responded Judith fervently, while tears coursed down her wan and woe-worn cheeks, and sobs burst from her troubled breast. "Let my son be safe in thy everlasting arms for eternity—and teach this rebellious heart to resign him cheerfully to thee, from whom the blessing came!"

Pale and motionless Claudia remained, until Naomi and Judith rose from their knees. She could not bow down with them, and join in a prayer that breathed a spirit so contrary to the action into which she had just been betrayed. She would have given worlds to recall the fatal letter. She now felt convinced that its only result would be to lower her in the opinion of Theophilus, and perhaps to destroy his affection for her. She ceased to imagine that her arguments and persuasions would shake the resolution that was founded on so pure a faith, and strengthened by the prayers of those who were ready to sacrifice so much from love to the Saviour, and regard to the honour of his name.

"Come hither, my daughter," said Judith, in a voice of tender commiseration, as she looked on her agitated countenance; "come hither, and learn to take comfort from the Source where I have sought and found it. Your trial is heavy indeed: perhaps it is even harder for you to bear this affliction than for me; for I shall yet, by God's mercy, have an affectionate and beloved husband to share my sorrows; and you, my poor Claudia, you will, alas! be very desolate. Nevertheless, there is one Comforter who will never leave you. That 'Friend who sticketh closer than a brother' is ever near to support and strengthen you; and leaning on his Almighty arm, you may bear even the coming hour without repining."

Claudia threw herself into the arms of Judith, and exclaimed, "I have cast off that friend! Oh! my mother, I have been a traitor to Him, and he will sustain me no longer."

"My child," replied Judith, "grief has caused your reason to forsake you. Why do you utter such dreadful words? How can you have cast off the Lord, whose service is a delight to you?"

"I have done worse, Judith," said Claudia, shuddering, and fixing on her a look of such wild grief as terrified both her and Naomi. "Do not interrupt me; I will tell you all, and then you will curse me, and cast me from you, and earth and heaven will abhor me!"

"Cease, dearest Claudia," cried Naomi, approaching the unhappy girl, who shrunk from her as if she felt unworthy of the sympathy of one so pure and good as her friend appeared in her eyes; "compose yourself, for you are labouring under some painful delusion. Why did I let you leave us this morning, and not follow you and bring you back to Judith? I thought you were with my mother, and that her kind sympathy would soothe your mind."

"Why did I leave you, indeed, Naomi!" replied Claudia; "you would have saved me from this crime Let me speak it all, for my heart will break if I do not confess my sin. I have written a letter to Theophilus, and ere this he has received and read it. I have implored him for *my* sake to deny his Redeemer,—for *my* sake to make a profession of returning to Judaism! I told him that he would be my murderer if he spoke the word that would seal his condemnation to-morrow. Oh! I said more than all that—I sought to make myself his idol, and to cause his love for one so despicable to stand between him and his God! He will not heed my guilty ravings, for he is too holy to be infected with such base weakness. But he will loathe me, and despise me as I deserve; and when he is a pure and blessed saint in heaven, I shall have lost the only consolation that could have remained to me—that of knowing that his heart was mine until it ceased to beat; and hoping that when mine was cold in death my spirit might soar above, and

join him in those realms of peace which Jesus Christ has promised to those who are *faithful to the end.*"

Judith and Naomi were filled with horror and alarm at this passionate declaration of Claudia's. They grieved deeply that she should have fallen into such a snare of the evil one, and thus have added another and a most bitter trial to those which now surrounded Theophilus. They did not apprehend that his faith would be shaken in the slightest degree; but they knew that nothing could make death so dreadful to him as the belief that Claudia was wavering and unsteady in the religion which he had delighted to teach her, and that when he was no longer at her side, she might sink back into comparative darkness and unbelief. The depth and sincerity of her repentance were most evident to them; and all they now desired was to soothe and tranquillize her mind, and to find some means of conveying to Theophilus the assurance that she was not so unworthy of his affections as her recent conduct might lead him to suppose.

When by their affectionate efforts they had succeeded in calming the violent emotion of their self-condemned and humbled young friend, and convincing her that she had not sinned beyond hope of pardon either from God or man, they proceeded to consider how it would be possible for them to have any further communication with Theophilus. Many difficulties presented themselves; for his place of confinement was strictly guarded, and none could enter the building which contained his cell but the members of the council, or those who were furnished with an order from them. Zadok had received such an order, that he might have the opportunity of holding a controversy with his nephew, and persuading him to save his life: but no other person was permitted to visit him, and Zadok had already gone forth to seek the final and decisive interview. Javan had full power to enter the prison at all times, and to converse with the

captives; but how would he ever be induced to convey such intelligence as they wished to communicate? He had absented himself from home almost entirely since the fatal night when his cousin was taken prisoner; and when he did join his family, his manner was so abstracted and reserved, that his presence only tended to increase their unhappiness, and add to their conviction that he was the author of all their sorrow. In spite of all this, Naomi resolved to make an appeal to him, and endeavour to obtain his consent to her having an interview with Theophilus previous to his appearance before the council on the following day.

While the three friends were engaged in this conversation, Amaziah entered the room. He had been absent for many hours, employed in seeking aid from his personal friends in an enterprise which he had determined to attempt, but had not yet confided to his wife. He feared to excite her hopes by telling her of a scheme which might probably end in disappointment; and though she knew that he was labouring to interest his friends in behalf of Theophilus, she believed it was merely with a hope that by their means a majority of the counsellors might be brought to give a favourable judgment. This was a very slender hope, and Judith put no confidence in such an improbable result. She almost regretted that her husband should expose himself so much to observation, and the chance of being apprehended, when no reasonable expectation of any advantage could attend his exertions. Each night when he returned home she greeted him with joy and gratitude that another day of peril had passed away and yet he was unharmed: and every morning when he left the house another burden of grief and anxiety was laid upon her heart; for she felt that he might also be betrayed into the hands of his enemies, and share the fate of her son, notwithstanding the precaution which he always took of being himself well armed, and attended

by two or three faithful servants, also provided with weapons.

Amaziah looked thoroughly harassed and worn out with fatigue of mind and body when on this evening he came home from his wanderings. But his countenance was more cheerful, and his voice more encouraging, as he met the greeting of his wife with affectionate cordiality, and replied to her anxious inquiries concerning his success, and also whether he had met with anything to excite alarm for his own personal safety.

"I have been somewhat cheered by the deep sympathy which is felt for us and our dear boy by all who knew him well; and many have promised to spare no efforts that can in any way assist our cause. But, Judith, do not hope much from this. The council is composed of men who are little disposed to listen to any voice but that of bigotry or selfishness, and the only member of that self-elected tribunal who is favourable to our cause is Isaac. He sees that Mary is resolved to abide by her declaration that the death of Theophilus shall be the rupture of her engagement with him, and therefore he will give his vote for mercy. But Javan will not listen either to him or me, and almost all the other counsellors are devoted to him. Let us not despair, neither let us cherish vain hopes, but say from our hearts, 'the will of the Lord be done!'"

"Yes, my dearest Amaziah, I have, by the help of the Lord, taught my troubled spirit to rest more peacefully on His decrees, and to feel that all is wisdom and all is love. I believe that I can resign my son to the Lord, and refrain from murmuring; and now my most anxious fears are for your safety. Tell me whether it is threatened, or whether the best and greatest earthly blessing that God has given to me is yet permitted to remain and comfort me in the loss of every other?"

"I hope and believe that it is the will of God, my

beloved, that we may yet travel on through this wilderness together, to be a solace and delight to each other, as we have hitherto been. But I clearly perceive that this city is no longer a place of safety for us; and whatever it may cost us we must abandon it, and seek a distant refuge, as soon as nothing remains to be hoped or feared for our Theophilus. I have been warned by several friends on whom I can depend, and chiefly by the excellent Benjamin, that many of the Pharisees and counsellors have resolved to effect our ruin and destruction; and that when they have accomplished their cruel purposes against our son, and the rest of the victims whom they now design to glorify with the crown of martyrdom, their next step will be to draw us into the same fate, while they believe we are overwhelmed with sorrow, and may fall an easy prey to their malice. They know not the power of our blessed faith to enable us to triumph over every calamity; and to possess our souls in peace, even when the hand of the enemy is permitted to press heavily upon us."

"O my husband, how your piety and strength of mind support and comfort me, and put all my evil doubts and fears to shame!"

"And how they yet more abase and humble me!" added Claudia, in a trembling voice. "Judith, you will tell Amaziah of my sin and my repentance, and plead with him to pardon me, as you have already done."

Claudia's unhappy story was soon made known to Amaziah; and every extenuation of her fault that kindness could suggest was added by her friend, and received with equal consideration by him whose displeasure she expected and feared, though his regret at the misguided step she had taken was very great. He encouraged Naomi in her intention of seeking permission to see Theophilus, as the only means of removing the unhappy impression which Claudia's letter must undoubtedly pro-

duce on his upright and resolute mind; and also as the only opportunity which might be afforded them all of conveying to him their last assurance of undying love, and warm approbation of his faithful and courageous conduct. Naomi went to seek Javan, and found him just entering the vestibule, in company with Zadok. He listened to her request with a stern and somewhat suspicious countenance, and demanded for what purpose it was that she sought an interview with the prisoner.

"It is to carry a last message from my unhappy friend Claudia, and to give him his parents' blessing. They know that he will not purchase life at the expense of his conscience, and before he appears to hear his condemnation to-morrow they would wish to let him know their sentiments."

"They are already well known to others, as well as to Theophilus," muttered Javan; "and they may yet have further cause to rue their folly and imprudence. Why should they encourage their son in his obstinacy?" he added in a louder voice. "Why should they wish to urge him on to self-destruction, and compel me to be accessory to the death of my cousin? I would spare him if I could, but he will listen to no terms, and make no concessions."

"I never witnessed such firmness," said Zadok, and a tear glistened in his eye as he spoke. "That unhappy boy has made me love and respect him more than I ever did; even while he has grieved and angered me by his bold declaration of unshaken belief in the divinity of the Nazarene, and his determined opposition to all my arguments. Truly I believed that the sensible and feeling letter which poor Claudia addressed to him would have brought him to his senses, and shown him the folly of consigning his family to misery for the sake of his wild, unfounded notions. But no; he read it with tears, but they were tears of grief and disappointment, and not of natural sympathy. He showed me the letter; and as

he put it in my hand he exclaimed, 'Here is the bitterness of death, when those who love me best prove false to the holy faith which supports me!' From that moment sorrow took possession of his countenance, and he would listen to nothing which I was prepared to urge. I was forced to leave him far more depressed than I have ever seen him; and if you, Naomi, can say ought to lighten the load on his spirit, I will join with you in requesting your brother to give you an order to visit him. He is resolved to die, but I cannot bear that his last moments should thus be clouded with fresh sorrow."

"Oh yes!" cried Naomi, "I can chase away those clouds, and make him calm again. Dear Javan, do not refuse my prayer, but grant to Theophilus the only comfort that can now avail to cheer him. If I could hope to move you to yet greater mercy, I would kneel to you, and weep till the fountain of my eyes was dried up; but I know it will be in vain."

"Speak not to me of pleading for an apostate," said Javan, "or you may lose the boon you have already asked. Were I weak enough to give way to my own feelings of compassion, my companions in the council would better know their duty to God and man than to join me. The life of Theophilus is justly forfeited; but whatever may make his doom more tolerable I will gladly consent to. Swear to me that you have no design for aiding his escape, and I will let you see him."

"I have no object, Javan, but to act as a messenger from his friends. Would to God that they also might visit him!"

"No, Naomi, I am acting contrary to the express orders of the council in permitting any of his relatives, except our revered father, to hold any intercourse with him. It would only add to their own danger to attempt it. If you wish to go to the prison this evening, you must not delay, for night is closing in, and in another

hour the prison will be shut, and the gates will not be opened on any pretext until after sunrise."

Javan went to prepare the necessary order for Naomi; and she was hastening to communicate to her anxious friends the result of her errand, when Zadok recalled her.

"Here, my child," he said, "take this letter to Claudia, and tell her that Theophilus bade me say he would have written to her, but he did not possess the means. He told me to give her his most faithful love and dying benediction, and to say that he would try to forget she had written the letter which had caused him more sorrow than anything he had suffered since last he saw her. He said much more, but my own opinions forbid me to repeat the language which in his mistaken zeal he uttered. You will see him yourself; and I only pray that his present situation may act as a warning to you, Naomi, and deter you from persisting in a course which may lead to a repetition of such misery, and cause inexpressible sorrow to your dear mother and to me."

Naomi received the letter, and in silence withdrew, and hurried to the apartment where Claudia was waiting her return, with Amaziah and Judith. The agitated girl listened to the message which was sent by Theophilus, and took the ill-advised manuscript in her hand; but instantly threw it from her with abhorrence, and burst into an agony of tears.

"O Naomi!" she sobbed forth, "he does forgive me, then; but I know he despises me. Tell him my heart is breaking, and that the loss of his esteem was the last blow that was wanting to crush me to the earth."

"Dear Claudia," replied Naomi, "he will love you as sincerely and as fervently as ever when he knows how true your repentance is, and remembers that it was excess of love to him that led you to seek his preservation in a way that your own conscience condemned.

I will go to him, and say all that you could wish. I strove to obtain permission for you and his parents to see him, but Javan would not hear of it. Farewell for one hour, and fear not but that Theophilus will be restored to peace by what I shall tell him."

CHAPTER XVI.

Theophilus sat lonely and sad in his gloomy cell. Death had not had power to shake his steadfast soul, but the fear that his beloved Claudia was not rooted and grounded in the faith had filled him with sorrow. He now doubly deplored his unhappy fate, which would so soon remove him from her, and leave her perhaps a prey to doubts and repinings. Had he been permitted to remain with her, he felt sure he could have brought her to a better and a more enduring state of mind. But, alas! what is the value of a faith that will not stand the test of trials and afflictions? If Claudia professed to be a follower of the Lord Jesus, because the story of his life and death interested her feelings and touched her heart; and believed she was his disciple because those she loved and esteemed were his devoted servants, would such a faith save her? Theophilus was now sorrowful indeed, and his resource was in prayer. He prayed for Claudia, that the Lord would bring her to himself in sincerity and truth, though it might be with many afflictions. And while he was thus engaged, and deeply absorbed in his own melancholy yet pious and confiding thoughts, a light shone into his dark cell through the iron grating in the door, and a noise was heard of footsteps approaching. The bolts and locks of the heavy door were unfastened, and to his inexpressible surprise and delight he beheld Naomi enter. The door was immediately closed, and she approached him. The greeting of the cousins was silent and very sorrowful;

for all those feelings, which they had each struggled hitherto to repress, were called forth at the sight of each other, and the remembrance of all that had occurred since the sad night when they stood together at the deathbed of Mary at Bethany. When they had recovered their composure Theophilus eagerly inquired about his parents and Claudia, and listened with deep interest to the recital of all their grief and all their faith and resignation. Still greater was the interest and the satisfaction which he felt at hearing of poor Claudia's penitence, and the sorrow which her error had occasioned her; and most grateful was he that his worst apprehensions were thus removed, and that he could leave the world in joyful confidence that she would follow him in the path of true religion, and join him in a better world, as one of those who have "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

"Oh that I could once more have seen her!" he exclaimed, "that I might have told her how truly I pardon her for the pain which her well-meant but most mistaken effort to preserve my life has cost me. But as that cannot be, tell her, dear Naomi, that all is forgotten; and that the deep remorse she has felt for her temporary unfaithfulness to her Saviour, proves to me that she will never again forsake his fold or deny his name. She has experienced the bitter consequences of allowing any earthly object to interfere with her entire devotion to Him; and I pray that His grace may never again be taken from her, but keep her steadfast unto the end, even if she should be called to follow me by the same dark and dreadful road which I must so soon traverse."

"I do not fear for her resolution and her perseverance for the future, Theophilus. It is not personal suffering that would have driven her to forget her Lord and Master, and act as she has done this day. It was her fear for you that clouded her reason, and silenced the voice of conscience. To save your life seemed to her

the first object; and, alas! she forgot that if she succeeded in tempting you to comply with the blasphemous conditions of your cruel judges, the life thus purchased would be embittered for ever, both to herself and you. Her eyes are opened now; and she sees and feels that it is better to lose you here, and meet you again in that blessed world where you will soon be united to the company of apostles and saints and martyrs. But, poor girl, it is a severe trial for one so young, and whose feelings are so strong as hers. May the Lord be her strength and her consolation!"

"Naomi," said Theophilus, "I love to hear you talk of her; but you must forbear, lest you make life too precious to me. Pray with me, dear cousin, and help me thus to regain the calmness and the courage which I felt until poor Claudia's letter came to disturb my soul, and revive the struggle between the flesh and the spirit. Your ardent piety and perfect trust in God have often been my example and my comfort in other days, less sorrowful than this, and now you are come as an angel to bring peace to my troubled heart. Let us kneel together."

Naomi with great difficulty commanded her emotion, and complied with the request of Theophilus. They prayed to that Father who is never slow to hear and answer the supplications of his children; and when they rose from their knees it was with feelings of entire resignation, and almost of joy. Their discourse was soon interrupted by the entrance of the keeper of the prison, who desired Naomi to accompany him immediately, as the gates were about to be closed. A few parting words were all that could be uttered; and Naomi followed her guide through the long and gloomy passages that led to the entrance of the prison, while the tears which she had struggled to repress while in the presence of her cousin, now flowed unchecked. Her admiration of his faith and his humility, his tender

regard for the feelings of his friends, and his heroic resolution to bear the cross which was laid upon him, only made her regret still more deeply that he should be thus cut off in the flower of his days, and taken away from those who loved him so dearly, and to whom his life was in every way so valuable. It was one of those mysterious dispensations of an All-wise Providence which our understandings cannot fathom, and in which it becomes us in humble faith to say with the Psalmist, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, for it was thy doing."

Zadok had accompanied his daughter to the prison, and with several of his attendants he now waited for her in the porch. The state of the city was not such as to admit of any person traversing the streets alone and unprotected, after the shades of night had spread a veil over the sin and violence that continually defiled that once holy place; and Zadok also felt a vague apprehension that the same persons who had so successfully conspired against Theophilus, might also seek to rob him of his beloved child. He therefore had watched and guarded her with redoubled care ever since her conversion to Christianity had become more generally known; and both he and Salome lived in constant dread of a calamity which they felt would be the death-blow to all their earthly happiness.

Naomi leaned on her father's arm, and they slowly descended the steep and narrow street that led from the eminence on which the prison stood. From that situation they had an extended view of the lower city, now clearly visible in the moonlight, and looking so calm and so beautiful, that it was difficult to believe how much of vice and misery and crime was lurking amid the silent streets beneath them. The sight of a vast assemblage of human habitations without the sounds of human life has always something in it that is melancholy, and Naomi especially felt it so on this occasion, when her own spirits were depressed and exhausted by the effort which she

had made to sustain them during her trying interview with Theophilus. The city of Zion seemed sunk in sleep; and she thought with sadness how profoundly her inhabitants were also buried in the sleep of sin and false security, and how, by their impiety and hardness of heart, and by the oppression and murder of the innocent they were daily filling up the measure of their guilt, and provoking their long-suffering God to bring upon them the fierceness of his threatened wrath. Her father did not interrupt her reflections, for he sympathised in her feelings at parting with Theophilus; and his own mind was occupied with sad thoughts also, though they differed greatly from those of his daughter, and were unmixed with the holy consolations and triumphant hopes that cheered her while she contemplated her cousin's approaching fate.

The silence was broken suddenly and fearfully. The wild deep voice of the son of Ananus made Naomi start, and a sensation of terror ran through her frame as she saw his unearthly form approaching with his usual rapid strides, and heard his yet more unearthly cry, "Woe, woe to the city! woe to Jerusalem!"

She shrunk back, and would have drawn her father into the shade of a deep archway by which they were passing; but the mysterious prophet had fixed his glaring eye upon them, and came directly towards the spot where they stood.

"Woe to thee, Zadok, thou son of Aaron!" he cried. "Woe to all thine house! and woe to thee also gentle maid of Zion. Thy star shall set—but it shall rise again." He turned away, and would have passed on, but Zadok caught him by his loose and tattered garment, and addressed him in a voice of kindness:

"Come home with me, thou son of Ananus; and let me give thee clothes and food. You utter unceasing woes against our city and our families; but I will return thy curses with blessings, for it pains my heart to

behold a fellow creature so desolate and so miserable. Hunger and fatigue have made you mad. Come home with me, and cease to terrify the women and children, and scare away their sleep by night with such doleful sounds."

The prophet looked at Zadok, and his haggard countenance relaxed from its usual severity and abstraction; but it was pity for him who offered him kindness and shelter that made him pause, and not a thought of relaxing his almost miraculous exertions, or giving repose to his worn-out frame.

"Seek not to detain me," he exclaimed; "I have yet more woes to proclaim. I must tell it in the ears of every inhabitant of Zion that woe is coming! I see the gathering clouds—I hear the distant thunders of Jehovah's wrath—and I must forewarn my countrymen of the coming storm. Save yourselves, oh ye that be wise! But it is too late—the decree is gone forth! I hear it now—A voice from the east! A voice from the west! A voice from the four winds—crying, Woe, woe, to Jerusalem!"

He broke from Zadok's grasp with the unnatural strength of a maniac, and wildly fled up the street till he reached the prison walls, when again he took up his fearful note, and woke the inmates of the gloomy pile from their temporary forgetfulness of care and sorrow. This encounter did not cheer the spirits of Naomi: she remembered the denunciations which the son of Ananus had addressed so pointedly to Claudia, and felt how the woes which he had prophesied had been fulfilled; and she could not banish from her mind the impression that further sorrows were hanging over her father and her family. Claudia was anxiously waiting to receive her on her return, and with Amaziah and Judith she was cheered, though deeply affected, at the account of Theophilus's peace and resignation. His message of forgiveness and love to poor Claudia awoke all her sorrow,

though it relieved her heart of a heavy burden, and animated her to resolutions of future devotion to the cause for which Theophilus was about to resign his life.

The morning dawned, and found the anxious party still assembled together and still conversing on the same deeply interesting subject. The final appearance of the prisoner before his hard-hearted judges was to take place at noon; and long before that hour Amaziah left the house, telling Judith that he was going to make the last effort for the preservation of their son, but warning her to cherish no hopes of his success. Zadok also went forth with Javan and Isaac, to be present at the meeting of the council, which was to be held in a large hall adjoining the prison; and Mary once more declared to her affianced husband, privately and solemnly, that if he did not return to announce the acquittal of Theophilus, she would never see him more. She had lately begun to doubt the sincerity of his affection, and she resolved that he should give her this proof of his devotion to her wishes, or lose the prize he so eagerly coveted.

The council assembled, and having gone through the preliminary forms which they had themselves instituted, the president commanded the Nazarene prisoner to be brought forth. Zadok almost regretted that he had entered the hall when he saw his noble and undaunted kinsman appear, for his feelings of pity and admiration were painfully excited; and he knew that it was all in vain to raise his single voice in his favour. Isaac demanded of the prisoner whether the mercy of the court in allowing him time for repentance had been effectual; and whether he was now prepared to abjure his errors, and publicly to acknowledge that Jesus of Nazareth was an impostor, who had suffered the due reward of his crimes and seditions.

A holy indignation sparkled in the eyes of Theophilus

at this blasphemous question. He paused a moment to subdue his rising spirit; and then, with a calmness and dignity that impressed even his enemies who thirsted for his blood, he replied:—

"Isaac, may God forgive you and your accomplices in this day's guilt, for the insult you have dared to utter. By his grace I declare that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of the Most High God, the expected Messiah, and the Saviour of the world. His death was the sacrifice appointed by his Father before the foundation of the world, to expiate the sins of all mankind: and it was brought about by the pride, cruelty, and unbelief of the Jews, who with wicked hands did crucify and slay him. I have given myself to Him who died for me, to be saved and pardoned and glorified by his grace; and shall death affright me from him? Oh no; his love is present with me now, and dearer is that love to me than all this world can offer!"

"Is this your final declaration, Theophilus?" asked Javan, with a look of great anxiety: "are you so resolved to perish both in body and soul, and to be cut off eternally from the portion of Israel?"

"O Javan!" replied the prisoner, "I will say to you, are you still thus hardened against the truth, and determined to despise the salvation of the Lord? The drowning man, who has grasped a powerful arm to save him from destruction, does not wantonly abandon his hope; and I have found an Almighty arm, to which I cling for salvation from my sins, and from their eternal punishment. Shall I idly loose my hold, and fall back into the billows and deep waters out of which I have been rescued? No, Javan, no! heaven is before me and I will not look back. The final step is fearful to flesh and blood; but His rod and His staff shall comfort me. All the favour that I now crave at your hands is, that I may be disturbed no more by questions or arguments, but left alone with my God and Saviour, until

ye come to liberate my soul, and send it forth to meet Him in a purer state. From my heart I forgive you all; and my farewell to you is a prayer, that when you come to face death as nearly as I now do, you may have found the same all-powerful and all-merciful Guide who now leads me on, and gives me strength and victory."

A murmur ran round the court, and some voices were heard expressing pity and admiration for the young and ardent prisoner. Zadok boldly pleaded for his release, and Isaac leaned strongly to the side of mercy; but they could urge nothing to change the stern decree of the council, that every convicted follower of Jesus should be put to death. The very eloquence and bold confession of Theophilus only spoke his own condemnation, and proved how dangerous and zealous a disciple of the Nazarene they had it in their power to destroy.

A division took place, and loud and angry words were heard, while Theophilus looked calmly on, for he saw that his fate was decided. Suddenly the doors of the hall were thrown open with violence, and Amaziah appeared at the head of a numerous and well-armed band: he looked eagerly round the apartment, and instantly broke through every obstacle, and springing to the spot where his beloved son was standing, caught him in his arms, crying, "I will save you or die, my son!"

The tumult became general, for Isaac, without openly joining the party of Amaziah, used every effort to increase the confusion, and give him a better chance of success. Zadok forgot his priestly character, and all his former prejudices against the Nazarenes, in the hope of rescuing his nephew; and he with his arm and his voice encouraged those who surrounded and defended him. It was a moment of intense feeling for Theophilus; all the ties of nature and affection resumed their hold on his heart, and hope once more revived that life and liberty might be granted.

Before Javan left his home that morning, one of Mary's servants had requested to speak with him in private. It was Reuben, the same who had revealed to Isaac the conversation which he had overheard in the garden between Naomi and Claudia, and which had led to much sin and sorrow. He had now come on a similar errand of treachery, to betray to Javan the plans that were in agitation for the rescue of his cousin: he told him that Isaac had conferred with Amaziah several days ago, and had promised to befriend his son in every way that was consistent with his own character, though he found it hopeless to persuade his coadjutors to pronounce his pardon. Trusting to his promises, which were secured by self-interest, Amaziah eagerly concerted with him a scheme, which appeared to give the only chance of saving Theophilus, though at the same time it involved considerable danger to his father. Several of his friends were induced to lend their aid; and though fear for their own safety prevented their joining in the enterprise, yet they placed their domestics and armed retainers at the disposal of Amaziah, and he entered the hall with a force quite sufficient to effect his purpose.

But treason had counteracted all his plans. Javan had taken advantage of the information which Reuben had deceitfully obtained, and had placed a strong body of troops in ambush among the walls of the prison, ready to rush in and attack Amaziah and his followers in the rear. Reuben was at hand to summon them, and when Javan saw that all his uncle's men had entered the hall, he made a sign to him, and in a few moments the troops were at the door. Their numbers were greatly superior to those of Amaziah's party, and the contest was soon ended. The prisoner was secured, and borne away again by a private entrance to his dungeon, before his distracted father was aware that all hope was gone. His indignation and grief then broke forth with violence, and he reproached the council with their

injustice and cruelty, in language that was not likely to pass unnoticed or unrevenged. Zadok feared for his brother's safety; and as nothing further could now be hoped for the unfortunate Theophilus, he led, or rather forced him from the hall, while the exasperated members of the council regarded him with looks of rage, which they were only deterred from openly demonstrating by respect for Zadok, and fear of offending Javan. When the brothers had left the hall, followed by all the band who had accompanied Amaziah, Isaac desired that the business of the day might be resumed, and that the rest of the Nazarene prisoners (whose fate had been delayed until Theophilus could be added to their number) might be brought up for final condemnation. The President had been astonished at the sudden and unexpected appearance of the troops, whose services Javan had so promptly obtained, and having also observed the dark countenance of Reuben among the servants who kept the door, he began to suspect that the enterprise of Amaziah had been betrayed, and that his own share in it might also be known by his brethren in the council. Such a discovery would infallibly destroy all his political power, and deprive him of the confidence and esteem of Javan, which was founded on his character for religious zeal and firmness of purpose. To obviate all injurious impressions which might have been made by the reports of Reuben, he now resolved to show a determined severity towards the ill-fated prisoners who were to hear their condemnation from his lips; and rather to risk the loss of Mary's favour than subject himself to the suspicion of being a friend to Theophilus, or any convicted Nazarene.

The entrances to the prison and the hall were carefully closed and guarded before the prisoners were summoned, to prevent the possibility of a rescue being again attempted; and the officers and keepers of the prison soon appeared leading the unoffending victims, bound

with chains and fetters. They were eight in number, besides Theophilus, of different ages, both male and female,—some in the bloom of youth and some bowed down with age and infirmity and suffering, but all inspired with one feeling and strengthened by one hope. They had already declared their firm and unalterable belief in the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth, and no further examination now took place, except a formal offer of pardon if they would renounce this belief, which was decidedly rejected by each in turn. The sentence of death was pronounced by Isaac; and the prisoners were informed that no delay would be allowed, and that they must prepare for execution at the dawn of day on the morrow. They were condemned to be beheaded in prison; and at the suggestion of Javan a clause was added that their bodies should be exposed on the walls of the building, and then carried to the valley of Hinnom, and burnt in the fires which were kept constantly burning there to consume the filth and rubbish of the city.

This appeared a wanton indignity; but Javan urged that it was necessary, in order to prevent the friends of the criminals obtaining possession of their carcasses and performing their idolatrous rites at their burial. A shudder of disgust and dread might have been perceived to run through the line of prisoners as they heard their hasty doom announced, and thought of the loathsome place to which their bodies would so soon be consigned; but they spoke not to plead for a reversal of this cruel decree. They knew that their fate was decided, and they did not wish their crown of martyrdom to be delayed, or to be kept longer from the place of their rest. Theophilus turned his calm and steadfast eye on Javan when he heard him propose that one of his own kinsmen should be treated with an indignity which would not have been offered to the meanest Jewish beggar; and he met the gaze of his cousin fixed on him with an

expression of concern and interest that only surprised him the more. Javan had attained the object for which he had been labouring and intriguing so long; and now that Theophilus was in his power, he almost regretted that his principles compelled him to complete his revenge. He hastily desired that the prisoners might be removed, and all placed in separate cells. No sooner was this order obeyed, than the fierceness of his countenance returned; and rising from his seat he began to denounce Isaac as a traitor to his religion and his party, and proceeded to state all the particulars which he had heard from Reuben of his double-dealing and his conspiracy with Amaziah for the rescue of an accursed apostate. Javan spoke with violence, as if to work up his own feelings of anger against Theophilus and all who wished to save his life; and he succeeded in exciting those of his colleagues. Isaac would have denied the charge brought against him; but Javan compelled his informer unwillingly to appear and swear to the truth of his statement, when he detailed so minutely the conversation which he had overheard between Amaziah and the President, and also the orders which he had himself received from Isaac to procure the services of some men on whom he could depend, and conduct them to Amaziah on the appointed morning, that no doubt remained of his guilt. He saw that his reputation and influence were gone, and after a sharp altercation with Javan, he left his seat and hurried from the hall. A short time he was shut up in a private room in his own house, while his servants guarded the door, and then he delivered a letter to his most confidential attendant, and gave orders for the removal of all his valuable goods to a place of security which he pointed out. This done, he armed himself completely, and, followed by such of his domestics as had consented to accompany him, he left the house, and pursued the most obscure and unfrequented paths that led to the temple. In this holy edifice the Zealots

and Idumeans were still established and fortified, and at the outer gate he presented himself, and demanded to speak with John of Gischala, the valiant leader of the party.

He was speedily admitted to the presence of the wily John, but his attendants were detained in an outer court until the will of the chief should be made known. Isaac's story was listened to with great satisfaction by John; and his offers of alliance were gladly received, for he was known to be a man of power and abilities, and his desertion of the popular party, as it was then called, was an event of considerable importance. The bitterness with which he spoke of his former friends was a guarantee to John that an impassable gulf had now separated them, and his quick discernment enabled him to discover and profit by the irritated feelings of his new ally. He had brought with him all the portable wealth which he possessed, and which was very considerable; so that in all respects he was a most welcome ally.

His desertion to the opposing party was soon known to Javan and his colleagues, and they immediately pronounced him a traitor, and confiscated his house and property to the use of the state—as they styled their own self-constituted authority—but they found little of value remaining in the building. The servants had removed everything that they could carry, not to place it in security for their master, but to appropriate to their own use; and the house was left desolate and empty. The letter which Isaac had entrusted to his favourite domestic was faithfully delivered to Mary, his affianced bride, but it failed to produce the effect which he had designed. It contained a vehement entreaty that she would follow him to the temple, and in that sacred place unite herself to him for ever. He urged that his love for her, and desire to comply with her wishes, had been the sole cause of his present distress; but that if she would keep her plighted faith and join him with all her

riches, he doubted not they could find means to escape together from Jerusalem, and enjoy wealth and happiness in some more favoured clime.

Mary of Bethezob had agreed to unite herself to Isaac when he was in power and a high station, but she had no regard for him that was strong enough to tempt her to take such a step as he proposed. She replied to his letter with a decided rejection of all his plans, and a declaration that she should adhere to her resolution of seeing him no more, since he had failed to procure the liberty of Theophilus. Her letter was delivered to his servant, who immediately followed his master to the temple, and attached himself to the party which he had espoused. Javan's indignation at the conduct of Isaac was very great: he had placed considerable confidence in him; and had revealed to him many particulars of his secret intercourse with Simon, and his intentions of inviting him into the city as soon as he could sufficiently prepare the way for his reception by the popular party. All these designs he knew would now be disclosed to his bitter enemy, John of Gischala, who might, by his craft or his power, be enabled to frustrate them; and he resolved to hasten their execution as much as possible, that he might bring Simon and his forces within the walls of the city before the wily and intriguing John could have time to concert any plans of opposition. But he wished that Amaziah should depart from Jerusalem before the son of Gioras was raised to the sovereign command. His bigotry and his revenge were sated by the capture and condemnation of Theophilus; and the conduct of his cousin had convinced him that threats and sufferings were ineffectual to make the Nazarenes forsake their opinions. He did not therefore wish to apprehend his uncle, and have to witness the same exhibition of fortitude and faith which had excited his admiration in Theophilus, and the same grief and horror which his exertions for the honour of Judaism had

already caused to his parents and relatives. What a strange mixture of good and evil was Javan! and how entirely did his narrow and prejudiced views of religion mar his own happiness, and extinguish all the better feelings and more noble propensities of his heart!

Zadok and his unhappy brother had returned to their home, after the fruitless effort for the preservation of the prisoner. A crowd of persons were assembled round the door of the prison, and the cause of the disturbance which was heard within the walls soon reached them, and excited a great feeling of indignation against Amaziah. The Nazarenes were held in entire abhorrence by the populace; and the rumour that an attempt had been made to rescue a convicted heretic and others, to deprive them of the savage joy with which they always hailed the execution of such victims, filled them with rage. But when they beheld Amaziah come forth from the porch leaning on the arm of the holy and respected Zadok, the tide of feeling was divided. Some of those who knew and esteemed the character of the afflicted father, were touched by his profound but manly grief; while others loudly assailed him with insulting epithets, as the father of an apostate, and even as being suspected of sharing the guilt of his son. The presence and protection of Zadok, and the commanding manner in which by his voice and gestures he forbade the approach of the angry multitude, were hardly sufficient to prevent their rushing on Amaziah, and inflicting summary vengeance on this unoffending and almost broken-hearted man But those who pitied his sorrow united with his own attendants and followers, and formed a strong guard around the noble brothers, and in this manner conducted them safely to their own dwelling, amidst the cries and insults and curses of the infuriated mob.

The anxious inmates of Zadok's house, who sat trembling and weeping while expecting the return of their relatives from the trial, were startled by the shouts of the

approaching multitude; and for a moment their hopes were excited that these might be cries of joy and triumph, to announce the acquittal of the prisoner. But as the crowd came nearer, they heard the curses and blasphemies that were uttered in a loud and threatening tone; and while they felt that no hope remained of Theophilus being free, they also feared for the safety of those who were equally dear to them. They hastened to the housetop, from whence they could look down on the street below, and they were terrified at the tumult they beheld, and at the danger which seemed to menace both Amaziah and Zadok; for the priest himself had become an object of temporary wrath, from his connexion with the denounced and hated Nazarenes, and his determined efforts to protect his brother.

Salome and her companions watched the still increasing crowd, until the objects of their anxiety had reached the strong gates that gave entrance into the court of the house; and when they were assured that they had passed through, and were safe from the assaults of their pursuers, they descended to meet them in the vestibule, and to hear all their apprehensions most fatally confirmed with regard to their beloved Theophilus. They had persuaded themselves that they were prepared for this result; but yet the shock was so severe, that it proved how much more of hope had lingered in every breast than had been acknowledged to each other, or even to themselves. Claudia was entirely unable to command herself, and she retired with Naomi to indulge her grief, and listen to the consolations which her pious and highly-gifted friend was enabled to bestow. When they had left the apartment, Zadok endeavoured to change the sad current of his own thoughts and those of his family, by urging on Amaziah the necessity for his immediately quitting the city. He represented to him the extreme danger to which he exposed himself, and those who were dearest to him, by remaining any longer

in a place where he had become the object of so much resentment, both among the higher and lower classes; and as his further stay could now be of no advantage to his unhappy son, he earnestly entreated him to commence his journey on the following morning, and thus escape from impending destruction, and remove himself and his family to a distance from the cruel scene which would take place at noon on that day. The feelings of Amaziah were harrowed by this appeal; and yet consideration for his family would have induced him to comply with his brother's advice, however painful it would be to him to leave the city while his son was yet alive, to suffer shame and death; but Judith would not listen to the proposal.

"No," she exclaimed, "nothing shall tear me hence until I know that my child is dead. If danger is to be encountered, I will not flee from it, till he is set free for ever from all pain and all peril. Then, when his ransomed and purified spirit is in the mansions of peace and joy, I will go forth with my husband, and seek a shelter in some spot where virtue and piety are not the mark for insult and murder."

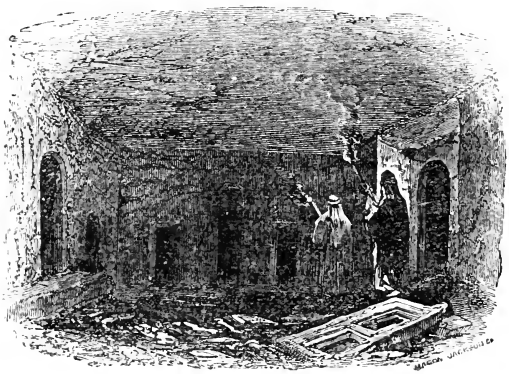
"Dear Judith," replied Zadok, "I feel for your sorrow; and I would to God that I could have power to remove it. Your errors and those of my brother have not destroyed my love for you, deeply as I deplore them; and anxiety for your safety is my only motive for urging you to leave my house. While you remain, which must be as short a time as possible, I will protect you even with my own life; and when you consent to seek a safer refuge, I will go with you and guard you on your way as far as Joppa. Though we have now, alas! no longer the same object in attending you there which first induced me to consent to take the journey, yet I feel that I can be a protection to you; and also that our poor afflicted Claudia will be soothed and supported by Naomi's presence."

"You have never been unkind, Zadok, even when most displeased with us," said Judith; "and this is a proof of your affection which I gratefully accept. Your society and that of our dear Naomi will be the greatest consolation that we can enjoy during our melancholy journey. I will make the best return that is in my power for your kindness, by remaining beneath your roof no longer than until the sun has set to-morrow. Oh! how that word *to-morrow* makes my heart sink away and fail within me! But I will be strong in the help of the Lord, and try to conquer such faithless fear and dread. I will promise to be ready to leave this most melancholy and yet most beloved place when to-morrow's light is fading away, and we may then reach Joppa the following evening. I will go now and give orders to our servants, that everything may be prepared, for I may not be so well able to exert myself *to-morrow*. Come, dear sister Salome, and give me your aid and your kind sympathy."

The necessity for exertion was useful to Judith and to Salome, who called up unwonted firmness, and commanded her feelings, that she might be able to assist those whose sorrow was so much deeper than her own. When Claudia was informed of the determination to leave Jerusalem on the morrow, she seemed to be overwhelmed with fresh grief, and earnestly besought that she might not be torn away so soon, and even that she might remain altogether with Naomi, and enjoy the melancholy pleasure of recalling all her past happiness, and dwelling in the same place where she had conversed with him, and learned from his lips the way of everlasting life. Kindly and gently Naomi reasoned with her, and showed her the danger and impropriety of her wish being gratified. She spoke of Judith's solitude when deprived of her son, and also of her whom she already looked upon as a daughter, and that argument made its way to Claudia's affectionate heart, and changed

her inclinations. She resolved to follow her adopted mother wherever she and Amaziah should go, and to devote herself to the task of cheering them, and supplying the place of their only child: and this resolution roused and supported her, and gave her an object for which she felt content to live and to bear her sorrow, so long as the Lord should appoint her days on earth.

The hours passed away, though slowly and sadly. Even Mary of Bethezob, whose spirits were usually unfailing, was buried in silence and sorrow: and little David, the life and amusement of all the house in happier days, was unnoticed and neglected. Night brought no cessation of the misery of that family, for sleep did not visit them, and they met on the fatal morning with countenances that showed deep traces of watchfulness and tears.



CHAPTER XVII.

The sun approached his meridian height, and as he mounted higher and higher the feelings of the sad and watching group became more intensely excited, until at the sixth hour, when his burning rays fell vertically on the terrace into which the apartment opened, a distant noise of the voices of many people reached their ears. It was a savage shout of joy and exultation; and it sunk into the hearts of the mourners as a death-knell. At that moment the headless bodies of the nine victims were thrown over the prison walls, and suspended there to be the objects of insult and mockery to the barbarous multitude. Javan's order that the executions should take place in the cells of the prison, and not publicly, had occasioned great discontent among the populace, who had expected to indulge their cruel and bloodthirsty inclinations by witnessing the last sufferings of the Nazarenes; and to gratify them the bodies were thus exposed until sunset; while wine and food were liberally distributed among the crowd at the command of Javan and his colleagues, who feared to excite the displeasure of the lawless rabble at such a time of sedition and insubordination.

A servant of Zadok's had been privately sent by him to await the exhibition of the dreadful spectacle, and to bring the intelligence to him when all was over. The man had known Theophilus well, and had loved him; and when he returned to his master's house, and Zadok

met him in the vestibule, he was trembling with horror and distress. The heads of the unhappy victims had not been exposed, but he had recognised the body of Theophilus by the garments which he well-remembered, and particularly a vest which Claudia had embroidered, and which he had worn on the evening when he left the house to return no more. Zadok rejoined his family, and they saw too plainly by his agitated countenance that all was over.

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord!" said he solemnly, as he entered the room; and a burst of uncontrollable grief was the only reply. But Amaziah did not long give way to this natural emotion; he knelt down in the midst of the group, who all followed his example; and in a tone of calmness, that astonished Zadok and Salome, he offered up fervent praises and thanksgivings that his dear son had now fought the good fight and finished his course, and had received the crown of glory laid up for him in heaven.

This done, he called his brother aside, and spoke to him on the subject that now weighed heaviest on his heart. The suggestion of Javan that the bodies of the prisoners should be burnt in the fires of Hinnom had been made known to him, and had occasioned additional misery both to him and Judith; and he requested Zadok to use all his influence with Javan and the other members of the council to obtain an order for the body of Theophilus to be restored to them, that they might have the satisfaction of burying it before they left the city. Zadok feared that his efforts to procure this indulgence would not be successful, but he readily promised to make the attempt; and immediately left the house in search of his son, who had not appeared to his family since the fatal sentence had been pronounced on the preceding day. He found him at the house of one of his colleagues; and the air of satisfaction that reigned on

his countenance gave a bitter pang to the heart of his father.

"Javan," he said, in a tone which showed his own emotions, "the dreadful scene is over, and I can no longer plead for the life of our kinsman. He has paid the debt which perhaps was due to his offended country and violated religion; and I would to God that he were yet living to forsake his errors and redeem his character. It is passed—and henceforth never let us speak on this subject again. My object in now coming to you is to request, as a favour to myself, that the body of one who is so nearly connected to me may not be exposed to the indignity which forms part of the sentence pronounced upon him. You were the proposer of that additional cruelty, and doubtless you can obtain the reversion of the sentence, if not for all the criminals, yet at least in this single instance."

"My father," replied Javan, "I see that you also wrong me, and attribute to me a wanton cruelty that is not in my nature. I did not wish my cousin's death; it was his restoration to virtue and piety that I desired; and that being hopeless, no course remained but to allow the laws of our holy religion to be executed. I have but discharged my duty in removing the unclean thing from the camp of Israel, and sparing not my own flesh and blood when the honour of Jehovah required the sacrifice. I had expected that you, my revered father, would have applauded my zeal, and joined with me in purging out this dreadful heresy, whatever might be the cost. But since you blame me, I must stand alone, and my conscience bears me witness that I stand guiltless. As to your request for the body of my misguided cousin, it grieves me to deny it; but I have no power to change the sentence. It was passed by the assembled council, as a preventive to sacrilege and profaneness; and I cannot from personal considera-

tions, demand the reversion of so wise and necessary a decree."

Zadok's brow grew dark. He had condescended to ask a favour from his son, instead of laying on him a command, which would have been more in accordance with Jewish manners, but which in Javan's case had long been found ineffectual. He had thrown off the paternal yoke whenever the obedience which was required was in opposition to his own views and principles; and though he respected and loved his father, he considered himself much more competent than Zadok to judge what line of conduct it was right to adopt. He saw that his father was frequently influenced by his kind and generous feelings to depart from the severe principles of his sect, and to lay aside the narrow views which generally governed the proud Pharisees of that period; while he prided himself on making every feeling and every interest give way to party spirit and religious bigotry. He had therefore learnt to treat his excellent and high-minded father as an equal, instead of looking up to him as the guide and example which in his earlier years it was his highest aim to follow and imitate. Zadok knew and felt all this, and he perceived that his son was now acting from motives which he did not entirely disclose, and which probably he thought his father would neither share nor duly estimate. He was convinced that Javan was not to be shaken by persuasion, and he spared himself the pain of a second refusal; but for Claudia's sake he made another request, which he felt sure could not be denied. He desired that Javan would send for the vest in which the corpse of Theophilus was still attired, and allow him to carry it back to his unhappy young friend, as a last relic of him whom she had loved so fervently. To this Javan readily consented, and requested his father to tarry in the house of his friend until he should return with the embroidered

garment, as he imagined that he would not willingly go to gaze on the mangled remains of his beloved nephew. He was not long absent, and when he returned he placed in Zadok's hand the vest, which was stained with the blood of the noble victim. The priest looked at it with deep emotion, and then returned to his own now gloomy dwelling.

Claudia had not been informed of the degradation which was designed for the remains of the heroic band of prisoners, and therefore she knew nothing of the object for which Zadok had gone forth. But when he gave her the well-remembered vest which she had worked with so much delight, and which Theophilus had loved so much to wear, she thanked him with her tears for his kind consideration in procuring it for her, and pressed the sad relic to her heart, with a feeling that all her earthly hopes had flown away with the life-blood that stained it.

Javan did not come home that day. He knew from Reuben of everything that was going on in his father's house; but to the surprise of that artful and cold-blooded villain, he took no steps to prevent the departure of his uncle, and secure another victim to tyranny and fanaticism. Reuben marvelled at his employer's apathy; and had not Javan read his countenance, and suspected designs, he would have hurried away and betrayed Amaziah's movements to others of the council, who would not have scrupled to take advantage of such information, and perhaps to waylay and apprehend him. His destruction and that of his family had long been determined on by these men, who were so zealous for the law; and they hoped to execute their purpose at an early opportunity, never suspecting that Amaziah would leave the city so immediately after the catastrophe which had befallen him. Javan was, of course, not ignorant of these intentions; and he secretly rejoiced that they would be frustrated. Indeed it was owing to

his contrivances that the warnings had been given to his uncle to lose no time; and he had said enough in his father's hearing to make him urge the instant departure of his relatives; and to prevent the possibility of Reuben's busy and intriguing spirit being exerted to thwart his private wishes for his uncle's escape, he kept him in his sight the whole of the day, and did not suffer him to speak to any person out of his hearing.

Thus, though Amaziah and his family knew it not, the same Javan who had caused all their anguish and woe was now engaged in securing their safety; and it was owing to his precautions, that when the last rays of the sun were gleaming on the summit of Mount Olivet, they passed quietly and undisturbed through the water-gate, and entered the valley of Jehosaphat, that ran along the eastern wall of the city, watered by the brook of Kedron, and filled with blooming gardens and fruitful orchards. This was not the way by which the travellers would naturally have quitted Jerusalem to proceed towards Joppa, as that city lay to the north-west; but they were unwilling to traverse the streets in order to reach the gate of the Upper Fountain, for they feared to expose themselves to observation. Therefore they passed along the valley until they came to the Tower of the Corner, when they took the road to Rama and Emmaus. They were a sad and silent party, and all were deeply absorbed in their own melancholy reflections. Even the servants and armed attendants felt so much respect and sympathy for their sorrow, that they spoke not, save in a whisper; and no sound was heard to break the stillness of the evening, except the measured tread of the mules that carried the litters and the baggage, and the horses on which Zadok and Amaziah rode. Naomi and Claudia travelled in the same conveyance; but Judith preferred being alone, that she might lift up her soul to God in freedom, and pour her griefs into the compassionate

bosom of her Redeemer. It had been a severe trial to her, as well as to her husband and Claudia, to leave the place where all that remained of their beloved Theophilus yet rested; and when she found herself enclosed in the curtains of the litter, and hidden from every eye but that of her Heavenly Father, she gave a vent to her sorrow, which relieved her bursting heart. Salome had offered to accompany her to Joppa, with Zadok and Naomi, but Judith would not allow her to do so. Her health was delicate, and the late trying scenes had so powerfully affected her, that she was not equal to the journey, and she therefore remained at home with Mary and her lovely little boy, who were to abide in her house until the return of Zadok and her daughter. Javan too would be her protector and occasional companion, though his presence had ceased to give his mother the pleasure that once it did, since he had been the means of changing her happy home into a scene of anxious care and sorrow.

While Amaziah and his company were passing forth from Zadok's house, and descending the steep street that led to the water-gate, they heard the distant sound of rumbling wheels on the bridge that crossed the brook of Siloam above the pool, and led to the road that opened into the valley of Hinnom. Zadok and Amaziah turned a quick and anxious gaze behind them, and saw afar off two heavy carts, attended by armed guards, and followed by a vast concourse of persons. The distance and the fading light prevented their distinguishing what burden the vehicles bore, but they knew that they contained the relics of the good, the brave, and the dearly-loved, and they shuddered as they thought of their destination.

The valley of Hinnom lay to the south of the city, between Solomon's Pool and the Potter's Field. A stream ran through it, which flowed into the Kedron, and by the side of this rapid stream the smoke of con-

stant fires was ever rising, and a hot and sickly vapour filled the air and rose to the hills on which the southern wall of Zion was built. In the shadow of that wall Javan was pacing to and fro, followed by Reuben, whom he still retained near him, until he could feel certain that his uncle was beyond the reach of his enemies. It would be difficult to say why Javan had chosen to resort to that spot at such a time. The loathsome valley was generally shunned by all who were not compelled by necessity to pass that way; and Javan had seldom visited the elevated terrace that overlooked it, and which but for this circumstance would have been a favourite and frequented walk. The view which this site commanded was noble and extensive, reaching over the varied and fertile plain to the Dead Sea and the mountains of Arabia Petræa, which form its eastern boundary, and embracing also the Hills of Judgment and Mount Olivet to the left. But it was not the beauty of this prospect that drew Javan thither on the present occasion. It was rather a strange desire to see the conclusion of a scene of horror and of woe, which had occupied his mind and filled him with gloomy and anxious thoughts for so many days and weeks. He had accomplished all his schemes against his unhappy cousin; but he was not happy—for with all his efforts he could not stifle his natural feelings so entirely as to be insensible to the sorrow which he had brought upon his family. He dreaded returning home to encounter the silent reproach of their tears; and almost unconsciously he wandered towards the valley of Hinnom, to excite still more his feelings of horror, by witnessing the last indignity that could be offered to the remains of the victims of fanaticism.

The heavy carts rolled slowly along the valley, and paused as they reached each smouldering fire. The filth and rubbish which composed the daily fuel of these fires were nearly exhausted: but fresh combustibles

were cast on them to make the funeral-piles of the martyrs, and then the bodies were flung, naked and headless, to be reduced to ashes. Javan watched them one by one, and by the light of the lurid flames he saw nine livid corpses thrown from the carts. His heart sickened, but he could not leave the spot, and there he stood, gazing down on the dreadful spectacle until all was over. The forms of the degraded criminals whose loathsome office it was to attend to these fires, were seen moving about amid the smoke and vapour, and appeared fitting inhabitants of this Gehenna, or place of Hell-fire, as it was commonly called. To Javan's excited imagination the altars once erected on this spot to Chemosh, Moloch, and Ashtaroth, were present again, reeking with their human sacrifices; and the cries of the innocent children who were offered up by hundreds to the gods of cruelty and murder sounded in his ears. The savage mob that had followed the dead-carts stood round to enjoy the spectacle, and as the flames burst forth afresh, and the bodies consumed away, they expressed their exultation and joy by loud discordant shouts, that only added to the infernal character of the scene. Among this rabble were some who came from other motives, and who trembled with stifled emotion, while to escape observation they endeavoured to join in the cries of the surrounding crowd. These were the friends and relatives of the martyred Nazarenes, and they came to wait until vengeance had been satiated on the bodies of those they loved, and the valley should be abandoned to the dogs and the vultures that lurked around to snatch their horrid meal.

One by one the fires went out, and darkness overspread the valley. The crowd dispersed, and the criminals left their daily employment to seek a short repose in some wretched huts at a little distance from the place of their appointed labours. Then, when all was silent, Javan saw a number of men and women approach one of the

fires which yet continued smouldering, and light their torches at the embers. Carefully they searched among the ashes for the bones of their relatives which yet were unconsumed, and having collected them from every fire, they enclosed the precious relics altogether in a casket, and noiselessly moved away down the valley towards Solomon's Pool.

"Shall I follow them?" whispered Reuben; and Javan started at the sound of his harsh voice, for he had forgotten that the menial was still waiting near him, and watching all that occurred in the valley with an interest equal to his own, but of a different nature. "Shall I follow them?" he repeated, "for they must surely be some of those accursed Nazarenes, who thus came to seek the remains of the malefactors. They cannot enter the city to-night, and I can watch where they hide. And then if your guards are let out on them in their lurking-place, we shall easily secure the prey, and ere long we shall have another such day as this!"

"Silence, villain!" cried Javan, disgusted at the coarse brutality of the menial, who believed that his employer shared his own feelings of gratification in the actual cruelties of that day, and thought that, like him, he would rejoice in the prospect of a repetition of them.

"Follow me to the city," he continued, "and you shall receive to-morrow the reward of your services. When I require them again I shall summon you; and meanwhile I command you to exert your powers of observation, and inform me if anything occurs which may be of consequence to my affairs; but see that you confide in no one else at your peril. Especially keep watch whether Isaac or any of his emissaries attempt to hold intercourse with your noble mistress, for we must preserve her and her property from his hands."

Reuben obeyed, and followed Javan, wondering at

his apathy in neglecting so good an opportunity of replenishing the prison with fresh Nazarene captives, and regretting the reward which he might have received for his information from others of the Pharisees or chief-priests. But he did not dare to dispute Javan's commands, and accompanied him to the gate, where they were readily admitted, as the young Pharisee was well known to the officer on guard there. They proceeded to the house of one of Javan's friends, and passed the night there; and in the morning returned to the dwelling of Zadok, where they soon learnt from Deborah that the priest, with his brother and all his family, had left the city on the preceding evening. Hannah had also accompanied them, with several others of their domestics who were suspected of partaking in their heretical opinions; and none remained who could be objects of persecution on account of their faith.

This was satisfactory news to Javan, and he immediately dismissed Reuben with a liberal present; and having paid his mother a short visit, which was equally painful to them both, he occupied himself in prosecuting his political plans, and forwarding his arrangements for the reception of Simon.

Meanwhile the travellers had proceeded without interruption through Rama to Emmaus, where they paused to rest and refresh themselves, and then resumed their journey. At Lydda, where they arrived at an early hour the following day, they made inquiries, and found that a band of Roman soldiers had come thither from Joppa for several days preceding, and had diligently sought for a party of travellers from Jerusalem, but had returned each evening greatly disappointed at not meeting them. It was hardly safe for Amaziah's company to advance further on their way, without a stronger guard than his own and Zadok's armed servants. They were about to leave the province of Judea, and enter that [illegible] which was almost entirely in the hands

of the Romans; and without being under the protection of some of the conquerors, they might be exposed to insult and danger. But it was uncertain whether Rufus would send his men again to meet them; and it was even possible that he might not wait any longer at Joppa, but return to the Roman army at Cæsarea, under the impression that his daughter's plans were changed, and that she would not now join him there. These considerations induced Zadok and Amaziah to decide on proceeding to Joppa without delay. They had traversed more than half the distance which divided the two cities, when they saw a band of soldiers approaching towards them, whose martial bearing and well-appointed accoutrements declared them to belong to the invincible army of Rome. Whether they came as friends or foes could not be discovered, and therefore Amaziah marshalled his men, and prepared for resistance if necessary.

The fears of his party were however speedily removed, by seeing the officer who commanded the troop put his horse into a gallop and advance alone to meet them. It was Marcellus; and though so many years had elapsed since Zadok and Amaziah had seen him, they immediately recognised his noble, ingenuous expression of countenance; and the warmth of feeling that beamed in his bright eye when he extended his hand to greet them, showed them that his long absence had not deadened his affections or obliterated the remembrance of early friendship.

His own eagerness prevented him at the first moment from observing that his friends did not receive him with the same joyful feelings that filled his own heart, and he was going to hurry past them towards the litters that followed at some distance, exclaiming,—

"Where is my dear sister, and where is Naomi? Theophilus, too, I do not see him; but no doubt he is in close attendance on Claudia. He is a happy man! I wish my prospects in life were as smiling as his."

Amaziah turned away in anguish at this playful observation; and Zadok caught the hand of Marcellus, who now perceived that all was not so full of happiness as he supposed.

"Is anything the matter?" he cried. "Is Naomi safe and well?" his fears making him recur first to her who was uppermost in his thoughts and affections.

"It is not for her, my son," replied Zadok, "that your sympathy will be excited; our poor Claudia will want all your affectionate consolations."

"What has befallen my own dear sister?" interrupted Marcellus hastily, yet with a feeling of relief that his fears for Naomi were groundless.

"All her hopes and all her happiness are blighted," said Zadok. "Theophilus is no more, and Claudia's heart is widowed."

"The Lord have pity on her!" ejaculated Marcellus fervently. "What disease has carried him off so quickly? But I will go to her, poor girl! She has yet a brother to love and to cherish her, and to mourn with her over what she has lost."

He dismounted, and giving his horse to a servant, he approached the litter in which his sister and Naomi were seated. The curtains were partially withdrawn, and they had seen him conversing with Zadok, and knew that the sorrowful truth was now made known to him. Claudia sprang from the litter, and threw herself wildly into his arms, while tears of bitter grief prevented her utterance. It is needless to dwell on such a meeting. All that was kind and affectionate Marcellus expressed; and then he gently replaced his sister in the litter, and in a voice faltering with emotion of various kinds, addressed himself to Naomi. She tried to hide her feelings of deep interest, and to meet him with the easy freedom of an old friend; but she was not very successful, and Marcellus saw with secret delight the embarrassment of her manner, and the deep flush that rose on

her pale cheek. He did not however forget the affliction of his friends in his own happy feelings. He hastened to Judith's litter, and greeted her with a kindness that only reminded her more forcibly of the son she had lost, and who had been a friend and companion to Marcellus when she remembered him in former happy days.

During the rest of the journey Marcellus rode by the side of his sister, and tried to cheer her with such pious suggestions as he believed she could receive and understand; but he did not utter the name of the Redeemer—of him who has promised rest to the weary and the heavy-laden, and is especially the consolation and support of His people under all their trials and all their sorrows. Both Claudia and Naomi felt how ineffectual must be every consolation that is not derived from Him, and more than ever they regretted that Marcellus should still, as they supposed, be ignorant of His mercies and His power; while both resolved to lose no opportunity of endeavouring to give him that knowledge which they found so precious to their own souls. But this was not the time for entering on such discussions; and they reached Joppa under the mutual impression that both parties were yet in ignorance of the only true way to peace, and to eternal life.

Rufus received the whole party with kindness and cordiality. His feelings were not so acute as those of his son, but he entered into the affliction of his daughter as much as he considered that the loss of a Jewish lover could demand; and endeavoured to console her with the hope of finding a more suitable husband among her own countrymen. This was not an effectual source of comfort to poor Claudia; and as it also implied that her father expected she should now return with him to the camp, she entreated Judith, when she was alone with her and Naomi, to request that she might still be permitted to remain with her; and though she could now no longer hope to become her daughter indeed, yet that she might

act a daughter's part, and dwell with her, at least until her father had a home to take her to. Judith would have been deeply grieved if Claudia had been taken from her, and she hastened to make her request known to Rufus, who kindly consented that she should accompany her friends to Ephesus, and remain there until he was able to return in peace to Rome. He was delighted with the improvement which had taken place in her since he had last seen her, and with the sweetness and gentleness that was apparent in her manner, in the midst of her deep affliction. She exerted herself to please her father, and to show the pleasure which she felt at seeing him, by repressing her own grief as much as possible in his presence. But when she found herself alone with Marcellus and Naomi, she indulged the feelings of her heart by expatiating on the many virtues and amiable qualities of him who occupied all her thoughts; and then it was that her brother first learned the cause of Theophilus's death.

"O Marcellus," said his sister, "how you would have esteemed and loved him if the Lord had spared him to meet you as a brother! But you could not have valued him as he deserved, for that very constancy and faith which led him to brave death, would have appeared madness and folly in your eyes."

"What can you mean, Claudia?" exclaimed Marcellus, eagerly. "Did not Theophilus die a natural death? I have heard no particulars, for I have been unable to speak to Zadok in private."

"Then you have not heard that he perished a martyr to the name of Jesus of Nazareth! and you do not know that your unhappy sister had learned the way of salvation from him, and now finds all her consolation and all her hope in that faith, which you, alas! despise."

"My dearest sister," cried Marcellus, embracing her with the warmest expressions of joy and affection, "this is a discovery which I had not even hoped for. Then

we are united by a tie even stronger and more sacred than that of our own near relationship. I too may glory in the name of Christian; and doubly do I now regret the untimely end of our poor Theophilus, since a union with him would only have strengthened you in this most holy faith, and not have tended, as I feared, to close your heart against the admission of the truth."

Tears of surprise and delight sprang to Naomi's eyes at this unexpected confession on the part of Marcellus; and when he turned a look of anxious inquiry towards her, and read the expression of her lovely and animated countenance, he could not doubt that all for which he had hoped and prayed was already fulfilled, and that the great obstacle which he feared might for ever have separated them, was already removed.

"Naomi," he said, "am I right in indulging the hope that you also share the feelings and the sentiments of my sister? It would be happiness indeed to hear your lips confess the name of Jesus the Messiah."

"Blessed be that name for ever!" replied Naomi with fervour. "I know that there is none other name under heaven whereby we may be saved."

"How merciful has the Lord been to us," said Claudia, "in thus leading us by various methods into the same way of salvation! When, my brother, did you hear of Jesus? and who opened to you the treasures of the Gospel?"

Marcellus related to his attentive auditors all the particulars of his conversion at Rome, and the various events which had since that time strengthened and confirmed his faith. And from Claudia and Naomi he learned the interesting story of their spiritual birth and admission into the church of Christ. Naomi did not dwell on what she had suffered, or the trials to which her faith had once been subjected; but Claudia was eloquent in describing the piety and the firmness of her friend, and the benefit which she herself had derived

from her consistent character and holy life and conversation. All this was music to the ears of Marcellus. He had loved Naomi when he was a mere boy, and as he grew to manhood he loved her more and more. And after he had left Jerusalem, and entered into the gaieties and business of life, he still looked back with fond remembrance to the time when she was his constant companion; and her image was ever present to his heart and his memory. Never during his residence at Rome, or his subsequent wanderings, had he seen a being who could compare with the Jewish maiden, and all his hopes of future happiness were connected with her. Many were the fruitless schemes which he had at various times devised for getting admission into Jerusalem and seeing her again, and when he found that he was to have the happiness of meeting her at Joppa, his anxiety and impatience knew no bounds. But still there was one ever-recurring thought that damped his hopes and checked his desire of seeing her. He believed that Naomi was a Jewess in religion as well as by birth. She was the daughter of Zadok, the zealous Pharisee, the sister of the fanatical Javan; and could he ever hope that she would return the affection of a Gentile, and still worse, of a Nazarene? and even if she should yet remember him with the same feelings that she entertained for him in former days, was it probable that her father would consent to bestow her on a Roman soldier; or would his own conscience allow him to seek a union with one who could not share his most sacred feelings, and who would despise what he held most dear and holy? All these reflections rose strongly to his mind when he did again behold her, and almost made him regret that she appeared yet more lovely and more interesting than his memory had depicted her. But now to find that all his worst fears were unfounded, and that Naomi was like himself, a Christian, was greater happiness than he had ever dared to hope.

It was not long before Marcellus had ascertained that his affection for Naomi was returned, and that during his long absence he had been remembered with all the constancy that he could have wished; and he readily obtained a promise that if Zadok's concurrence could be obtained she would consent to be united to him as soon as the war had terminated. Until that period they must be again separated, for Naomi would not hear of leaving her mother under the present circumstances; and indeed she greatly feared that a more insurmountable obstacle would be presented in the opposition of Zadok to their wishes. Marcellus sought an interview with the priest immediately after his conversation with Naomi, and frankly declared to him his attachment to his daughter, and his happiness in knowing that she was not insensible to his love and constancy; and then he requested that all his long-cherished hopes might be crowned by a promise that she should be united to him in marriage as soon as the state of the country would permit him to enter Jerusalem and claim her. Zadok listened to his young and ardent friend with calmness, though with a clouded brow. Once he would have spurned his offers with disdain, and have declared that he would rather consign his child to the grave than bestow her on a Gentile and a Roman; but since her renunciation of her early faith, all his high hopes for her future destiny had faded away. He knew that she would never consent to become the wife of a Jew; and if he were to seek a partner and protector for her out of the pale of that religion which he regarded as the only way to heaven, where could he find one to whom he could confide her with more satisfaction than to Marcellus? All his ancient prejudices rose up to oppose the plan: but esteem for the private character of the suppliant, and consideration for Naomi's own wishes on the subject prevailed. He consented, though unwillingly, that if at any future time Marcellus should come to demand

his daughter, and be enabled to offer her a happy and peaceful home, he should be rewarded for his constancy by receiving her hand, and the rich dowry which was always intended to be her marriage portion.

Joyfully did Marcellus hasten to communicate this unhoped-for acquiescence to Naomi; and but for the sorrow that weighed so heavily on the heart of Claudia and her friends, and cast a gloom over all their own happiness, the few days that they passed together at Joppa would have been the brightest of their lives.

Judith and Amaziah rejoiced sincerely at the prospect of Naomi's being removed from Jerusalem, and thenceforth permitted to exercise her religion without opposition; and Claudia tried to offer her congratulations; but tears prevented her words of joy from being audible, for her heart recurred with a feeling of desolation to the time so lately past, when all the happiness that now seemed to be presented to Naomi had been so suddenly snatched from her own grasp, and buried for ever in the grave of Theophilus.

Nearly a week had elapsed since the arrival of the travellers, and the vessel that was to sail from Joppa to Ephesus had received her cargo, when a notice was given to Amaziah that she would weigh anchor the following morning, and that he and his party must go on board at sunrise. All his baggage was taken to the ship that same evening; and at the dawn of day Naomi took leave of the friends she loved so well, and stood on the shore to watch with weeping eyes the boat that carried them out to the vessel. It was a sorrowful parting for them all; but Naomi had not time for a long indulgence of her grief, as Zadok announced to her that it would be necessary for him to leave Joppa that same day, and that she must be in readiness to start in a few hours. Letters had just reached him from Javan, to desire his speedy return to the city, as important political arrangements demanded his presence, and therefore, as their

friends had departed, there was nothing to detain them any longer from home.

Marcellus and Naomi thought differently, but they did not venture to plead for a further delay; and in the afternoon they left Joppa with Zadok and Rufus, who accompanied his friends as far as Lydda. From thence the priest and his daughter proceeded towards Jerusalem, and Rufus and his son turned their steps in the opposite direction, to join their comrades at Cæsarea. Then did the rough but kind-hearted soldier give vent to all his feelings of indignation at the conduct of Javan, which he had hitherto restrained out of respect for Zadok He vowed vengeance against the treacherous Jew, who had thus escaped from the Roman army to blast the happiness of his own family, and reduce Claudia to sorrow and desolation. Marcellus sought to check his rage; but he could not wonder that an idolater should thus feel towards one who professed to be guided by a pure religion, and yet disgraced his profession by cruelty and treachery, such as the heathen would have scorned to commit.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Zadok and Naomi were shocked, on their return home, to see how greatly the recent melancholy events had left their traces on the appearance of Salome. For som time past her health and strength had declined, and it was evident that the anxiety she had suffered from so many causes, and the shock which her feelings had undergone at the lamentable termination, had been too much for her delicate constitution to sustain uninjured. Her spirits were broken, and Naomi frequently excited all her powers in vain to animate and interest her. Her mind was filled with gloomy forebodings of coming woe; and though the sweetness of her manner was undiminished, and her affectionate kindness unabated, yet there was ever a pensive sadness in her look and voice, that sank into Naomi's heart with a painful emotion of dread.

Mary of Bethezob repaired to her own dwelling soon after the return of Zadok, and her blooming and intelligent boy accompanied her; but he had become so much attached to Salome and Naomi, that great part of his time was passed with them, and by his innocent playfulness, he greatly helped to chase away their sorrows, while his thoughtless and light-hearted mother plunged again into gaiety and dissipation, and soon forgot all that had so deeply interested her while she was under Zadok's roof.

The priest himself was at this time much from home, for his counsel was sought by those who were most active

in the affairs of the city; and as he had lately become a warm supporter of Javan's scheme for bringing Simon to take the supreme command, his son gladly availed himself of his influence and his eloquence in persuading others to join their party. All the necessary arrangements were soon completed; and Javan departed on his mission to invite the son of Gioras and his troops to enter the walls, and rid the oppressed inhabitants of every tyranny but their own. Not many days after he had left the city, alarming news reached the chiefs and leaders: Vespasian had once more set his troops in motion, and was rapidly passing through the toparchies of Gophnitis and Acrabatane. A few more days passed away, during which the inhabitants of Zion looked forth anxiously for the approach of Simon, as the only succour that could avail them if the Roman arms should be turned against their city; but he came not—and instead of his friendly troops, the cavalry of Vespasian appeared at the gates of Jerusalem. A panic seized the populace at this unexpected sight; but their fears were of short duration, for the dreaded horsemen only remained a few days in the vicinity of the city, and having ascertained the distracted and divided state of the inhabitants, withdrew again to head-quarters, and left the devoted place to be yet further weakened by its domestic enemies.

The terrace at the back of Zadok's house commanded a view of the fields beyond the walls, and in that direction the noble equestrian band, the flower of Vespasian's army, passed by, as they retired from the city. They had traversed its whole circumference, and taken observations of its strength, and the capability of its walls and towers. Naomi knew that Marcellus belonged to this troop; and it was not surprising that when she heard the trumpets echoing along the side of Mount Olivet, she should look anxiously from the terrace-wall, and strain her eyes to distinguish him among the rest of the cavaliers. She believed that she succeeded, and perhaps

she was right, for one of that band tarried behind his companions, and turned his head long towards the spot where she stood; but if it were Marcellus he did not perceive her, for he rode on without any signal of recognition; and she returned to her mother to lament that she should thus be divided, by all the obstacles of war, from the being who was so well deserving of her affection.

Meanwhile one of the Roman commanders named Cerealis had passed to the south, and entering Idumea, had taken Caphethra, Capharabis, and Hebron. Almost every strong place was now in the hands of the Romans, and nothing remained for their conquering arms to subdue but Herodium, Machærus, Masada, and Jerusalem itself. Simon had secured himself and his forces in his stronghold at Masada while the enemy were reducing Idumea; but when Cerealis withdrew from that district, he again came forth and ravaged the already wasted country. He drove a vast number of the wretched population before his pursuing army towards Jerusalem, where they sought a refuge from his cruelty, and once more he encamped before the walls, to wait for the opening of the gates to admit him.

Javan had joined him at Masada, and now accompanied him to Jerusalem, expecting that he would be joyfully received by the inhabitants. But the Roman cavalry had left the vicinity; and the party who opposed Simon's entrance had gained a temporary ascendancy, so that the gates remained rigorously closed, and the chieftain revenged himself for his disappointment by putting to the sword all the unfortunate stragglers who ventured beyond the protection of the walls. Thus he warred on the unhappy city without, while John of Gischala oppressed it within. The hardy Galileans whom he had brought into Jerusalem with him were entirely corrupted by the pillage and license which he permitted to them. Robbery had become their constant occupa-

tion, and murders were daily committed by them in wanton pastime. Disguised in rich and splendid garments which they had acquired by rapine, they paraded the streets in parties; and suddenly drawing their swords, that were always concealed beneath their assumed garb of festivity, they rushed on the thoughtless populace who gazed on them, and fiercely stabbed all who came within their reach. No wonder that the helpless people looked abroad for help and succour, and that even many of the more enlightened believed that the presence of Simon would put a stop to these atrocities. But John was too powerful to permit the execution of the scheme at that moment, and had his rapidly-increasing party remained united together, he would probably have prevented the entrance of his rival.

At length, however, a division arose among his followers. His power excited the jealousy of the Idumeans, and they suddenly attacked the Zealots, and drove them to seek refuge in a palace near the temple, which was used by John as a treasure-house. Into this edifice they followed them, and forced them to fly to the temple itself, while they pillaged the palace of all the rich treasures that John had accumulated and stored up within its walls. But the Zealots assembled in overwhelming force in the temple, and in their turn threatened to attack the Idumeans, who did not so much dread their strength in open fight, as their desperation at being thus cooped up. They feared that they might sally out and set fire to the city, and so accomplish the utter destruction both of themselves and their enemies. Therefore they called together a council of the chief priests to consider what measures should be taken, and by their advice they adopted that plan which gave the final blow to every hope of a return to peace and tranquillity.

The historian Josephus, in relating this circumstance, remarks that "God overruled their wills to that most

fatal measure." And most true is it that He does thus overrule every event, and cause all things to work together for the accomplishment of his own most wise purposes. The priests unanimously advised that Simon should be invited to enter. All were now of one mind, and believed that no tyranny could be worse than the violence and license that now distracted the city and filled its peaceable inmates with alarm and horror. Matthias the high-priest, who from his situation rather than his talents exercised great influence over his brethren, supported the proposition, and even offered to go in person and bring in the expected preserver. He went forth, attended by a body of the principal men; and amid the joyful shouts of the misguided populace the son of Gioras marched through the streets, and established himself, without opposition, in the higher parts of the city.

Thus he became lord of Jerusalem in the third year of the war; and having once got an entrance into the city, he lost no time in securing everything that could tend to his own advantage and raise his authority higher over every rival faction. John and his Zealots finding themselves imprisoned in the temple, and totally unable to make their way out, began to fear that their lives would be sacrificed as well as their property, the whole of the effects which they possessed in the city having already been seized and appropriated by Simon and his followers. The new tyrant hastened to make an attack on the temple, assisted by numbers of the populace and had he succeeded in gaining an entrance, doubtless he would have realized the worst fears of the besieged, and put them all to the sword. But the Zealots had posted themselves in the porticoes and among the battlements, and they vigorously repulsed their enemies, killing and wounding many of Simon's men with the spears and darts which they hurled down from these elevated situations with unerring hand. To increase still more

this advantage which they enjoyed over their assailants, they erected four lofty towers; and from these they plied their arrows and other missiles with little danger to themselves, and great annoyance to the foe. They brought powerful engines for casting stones into each of these towers, besides the archers and slingers; and so great was the dread with which these machines inspired Simon's adherents, that considerable numbers of them declined the attack. One of these formidable towers was placed on the north-east corner of the temple, the second above the Xystus, the third looked down upon the lower city, and the fourth was built above the Pastophoria, where the priests were accustomed to sound the silver trumpets at the commencement and termination of each sabbath.

Affairs were in this state at Jerusalem, and Vespasian having subdued almost every contiguous place, returned to Cæsarea to await the result of the civil commotions in the capital, when news was brought him that Vitellius had assumed the imperial purple at Rome. This intelligence excited great indignation among Vespasian's officers and soldiers, who assembled in large companies, and declared that they would never submit to be governed by the cruel and licentious Vitellius, and that they had as much right to elect an Emperor as the troops who were dwelling idly at Rome. They therefore resolved to proclaim their general as Emperor, and to support his authority with their swords. For some time Vespasian declined taking on himself the heavy responsibilities of such an exalted station, but the tribunes only insisted the more strenuously on his complying. The soldiers even drew their swords and threatened to put him to death if he refused: when, finding all his repeated remonstrances to be vain, he yielded to their wishes; and after his proclamation, Josephus, who had foretold his exaltation, was set free from his bonds, and rewarded with great honours as a distinguished prophet,

and became the friend and adviser of Vespasian. The Emperor's time and attention were for some months necessarily occupied in establishing his dominion, and gaining over the adherence of the governors of the most important provinces of the empire, and Jerusalem was left to her own miseries and distractions. But at the commencement of the ensuing year (A.D. 70) he found himself firmly settled on the imperial throne. Vitellius had been defeated, and his death left the new Emperor at leisure to think of the reduction of the rebellious and obstinate city, which had so long bade defiance to his power. He did not again go in person to attempt its subjugation, but his son Titus was placed at the head of the army, and sent to complete the conquest of Palestine by the reduction of the metropolis.

During this time Marcellus had been obliged to remain at Cæsarea with his regiment, and had vainly sought permission to venture to Jerusalem, and try to gain an entrance, and visit his betrothed Naomi. The strict discipline of the Roman army forbade his running so great a personal risk when it was not called for in the service of the Emperor; and he passed these long months in anxiety and hope, waiting for the renewal of the war as the only event which could lead to the accomplishment of his wishes. He did not doubt that the capital would speedily yield to the efforts of the army, when its combined force should be collected beneath its walls; and then he trusted that no obstacle would remain to his marriage with Naomi. It was therefore with great joy that he hailed the arrival of his friend and commander, Titus, as generalissimo of the Roman forces, and heard the orders for an immediate march towards the capital, as soon as the army could be organized and prepared for the siege.

The news of Titus having assumed the command soon reached the miserable city, and filled the greater part of the inhabitants with dismay. They knew his prompt

and warlike character, and the devotion which the whole army entertained for him; and they feared that, at the head of such a force, he would never be repulsed from their walls by the divided and seditious troops who now wasted their strength in useless conflicts with each other. No events could have occurred more favourable to the success of the Romans than those which were taking place at this time in Jerusalem. The city was now divided into three distinct factions, and the streets ran with the blood which was shed in their fierce and continual encounters. Instead of endeavouring to organize a regular and efficient defence against the common enemy, each party was engaged in strengthening its own position, or attacking that of its antagonists.

Eleazar, who had been the first to set himself at the head of the Zealots, and seize on the temple as a garrison, beheld the superiority which was assumed by John of Gischala, with rage and jealousy. He affected a holy indignation at the sanguinary outrages daily committed by his rival; and at length he succeeded in drawing off from his party several of the most powerful and influential of his adherents. With these men and their followers he openly abandoned his former associates who remained faithful to John, and retired into the inner court of the temple, where, on the sacred gates facing the Holy of Holies, these savage men suspended their arms, yet reeking with the blood of their fellow-citizens.

In this most sacred spot, where the sounds of the holy instruments of music were wont to be heard, the jests and songs of the profane soldiery now echoed from the walls, and on the steps of the altar lay the expiring forms of men mortally wounded by their own countrymen. A great number of animals intended for sacrifices, and a quantity of other provisions, were found in the stores of the temple, and seized on by Eleazar and

his band, who were therefore well supplied with provisions; but they could not venture to sally out on the main body of the Zealots, who so greatly exceeded them in numbers. The height of their position gave them a superiority over John's party, so long as they remained in their stronghold; but though he suffered greatly in every attack which he made on them, yet his rage and resentment would not suffer him to cease from his attempts.

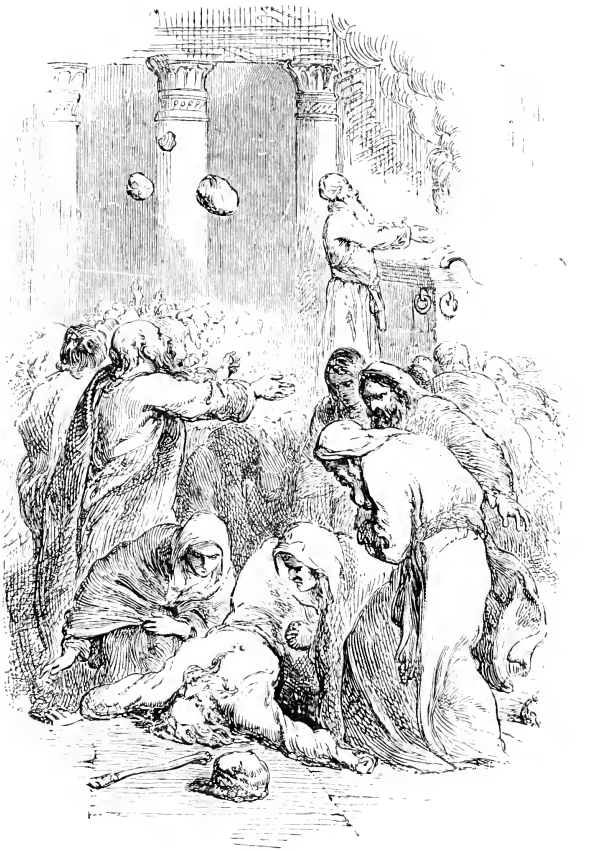
Meanwhile Simon the son of Gioras kept possession of the whole of the upper city and great part of the lower, and he harassed John continually from without, increasing his efforts when he found that his party was weakened by division. But John had here the advantage over Simon that Eleazar had over John, and he succeeded in repelling his assaults with little loss. The ascent to the temple was very steep, and Simon's troops found it both difficult and perilous, for the Zealots had a large number of scorpions, catapultas, and other engines, and with these they repulsed their assailants from below, and checked the party who looked down on them from above. Frequently it happened that the missiles which they discharged against Eleazar and his band, either slew or wounded those unoffending and pious persons who still continued to repair to the spot so hallowed to their memories, in order to offer their prayers and their sacrifices. Not all the horrors and dangers that surrounded them could deter many of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and even strangers from other provinces, from making their way to the temple where their fathers had worshipped; and passing over the marble pavement, now slippery with gore and strewed with the carcasses of the slain, to lay their offerings on the altar of the God of Jacob.

These persons were freely permitted to pass to and fro, unmolested by the garrison, who merely took the precaution of searching them, to discover whether they

carried concealed arms; but often, while they were engaged in fervent prayer, they sank expiring on the pavement, either pierced by an arrow or crushed by a heavy stone that came whizzing from the courts below. The noble and pious Zadok was seen to take his place undauntedly by the side of the altar, and to perform his sacred duties with a composure and dignity that commanded the respect even of the lawless and blaspheming ruffians who looked on in scoffing derision at the superstition (as they regarded it) of the worshippers. Many of his sacred brethren were wounded or slain, but he remained unharmed, and daily returned in safety to his anxious wife and daughter, to tell of greater horrors and fiercer conflicts than had disgraced the preceding day.

More and more deadly did the contest become. Eleazar's band, excited by drunkenness, ventured to sally forth against John, and when, wearied with bloodshed, they retired again to their garrison, he in his turn assaulted Simon. The whole space around the temple became a fearful spectacle of ruin and carnage; and in these wild conflicts the public granaries, that might have sustained the inhabitants for years, were either set on fire or wantonly destroyed by Simon, to prevent their falling into the hands of John.

Thus was the wretched city afflicted. The very power which the short-sighted people had invoked to free them from the tyranny of John, was turned against them and multiplied their miseries. The old men, the women, the helpless and the timid prayed in secret for the arrival of the Romans. They had dreaded this event as the worst of evils when first they heard it threatened; but now they were driven to desperation by their accumulated sufferings, and earnestly desired a foreign foe, as the only hope of deliverance from their domestic enemies. These wishes were, however, carefully repressed, for all the three factions were united on one point—the per-



ZADOK AT THE ALTAR.

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secution and destruction of every individual whom they even suspected of wishing success to the Roman arms. It was sad indeed to behold the deep but silent misery of the people; and still more dreadful was it to witness the inhuman desperation and hardheartedness to which constant danger and constant suffering had driven all ranks of men. The ties of natural affection were extinguished, the nearest relatives were abandoned, and when death had put an end to their woes, their bodies were left unheeded in the streets, to be trampled on by the troops or torn by the dogs.

Javan had entered the city with the son of Gioras, and was constantly engaged in his service. Simon confided all his schemes to him, and found him a most useful and efficient counsellor, as he was thoroughly acquainted with all the politics that divided the opinions of the inhabitants: and his local knowledge of the many private streets and lanes of the city was also an advantage to his chieftain, and enabled him to waylay and surprise the parties which were sent out by John. Javan devoted all his time and all his energies to the promotion of the cause which he had espoused, for he still believed that Simon was the destined instrument in the hand of Jehovah for the preservation of his people, and the destruction of all their enemies within and without the city. His pious and enthusiastic feelings were highly excited to indignation at the profaneness of the Zealots and Idumeans, and the sight of the Holy Temple desecrated by crime and bloodshed and intemperance, filled him with a restless and inextinguishable desire for vengeance.

Isaac, his former friend, but now most bitter enemy, knew his strong religious feelings, and the almost superstitious veneration with which he regarded the sacred pile, and mourned over its degradation. The counsellor had once affected to share and encourage these devout sentiments, when such a line of conduct seemed to promote his own interests; but now that he had severed

himself from the popular party, and joined that of the infidel John, he laid aside the cloak of hypocrisy, and rivalled the worst of his ruffian associates in acts of sacrilege and words of blasphemy. One day, when a party of Simon's troops were led by Javan to the temple wall, in order to assault the Zealots with darts and arrows, he seized on some of the sacred implements used in the service of the temple, and hastened to insult the feelings of the zealous young Pharisee, by profaning them to the most disgusting purposes. On the knives and pronged forks usually employed in preparing and dressing the sacred victims offered in sacrifice, he stuck the mangled limbs of the human bodies that were strewed around him in the court, and the brazen vessels he filled with human blood, and then cast them over the wall, where they fell at Javan's feet, crying out scoffingly that he presented him with suitable sacrifices, and holy instruments for preparing them. The blood of the fiery Jew burned at this sacrilegious affront, and deeply he vowed to be avenged on his insulting foe; but Isaac was now safe from his wrath, and laughed at his futile rage. Perchance it might be Javan's turn to triumph ere long!

That evening he returned to his father's house, gloomy and sad. Since his entry into the city in Simon's train, he had seldom visited his home, even at night. He felt such an irksome restraint in the presence of his family, particularly of Naomi, that any spot was more agreeable to him than the home of his childhood, and he generally dwelt at the palace, of which Simon had taken possession, as his head-quarters. On the night after his religious feelings had been outraged by Isaac, he repaired to Zadok's dwelling, that he might consult with his father on the future plans to be adopted by their party; and having held a private conference with him, he joined the rest of his family, who were walking on the terrace at the back of the house. This terrace,

and the small flower-garden which it overlooked, were now the only spots where Salome and Naomi could safely enjoy the open air, except occasionally when they ventured by the retired lane that ran below the garden, to visit Mary of Bethezob, and spend some time with her, in the more extensive pleasure-ground that adjoined her house. Even this short distance they never dared to go unattended by their domestics, who were well armed; and Mary used the same precaution whenever she repaired to the priest's house. She and her little boy were on the terrace when Javan and his father passed through the richly-carved marble portico that opened upon it from the house, and joined the party.

All the cheerfulness of social and domestic intercourse had died away beneath the chilling influence of danger and dread, and when friends and relatives met together it was only to relate fresh horrors and anticipate coming woes. The spirit of Zadok was yet unsubdued, and his confident hopes unchecked, by the misery and distress around him; but his wife did not share his sanguine feelings, and Naomi remembered the doom which had been pronounced on Jerusalem by Him whose every word must be fulfilled. Therefore she could not cheer her desponding mother with the prospect of peace and tranquillity, when she knew that these blessings would no more be bestowed on her nation until the measure of their chastisement should be fulfilled, and the Messiah once more return in glory to rule over his ransomed and repenting people. She looked forward to the approaching crisis with a steady expectation, trusting to the infinite wisdom and love of her Redeemer, to guard his own believing children from the ruin that should overtake his enemies. But she could not think of the probable fate of her beloved father and her mistaken brother without a profound dread. They as yet despised the only way of salvation—and how should they be saved in the day of calamity? She daily wept and prayed

before her God that he would mercifully incline their hearts to receive the truth, and in these prayers she found her best consolation. She had now no Christian friend to whom she could confide her anxious cares, or who could share her spiritual feelings and spiritual hopes; but her precious manuscript, the legacy of her beloved Mary, was an unfailing source of comfort and delight, when she could retire to her own chamber and peruse the sacred record.

Much of her time also was passed in private conversation with her mother; for Zadok was seldom able to remain with her for many hours of the day, and Salome's spirits were so depressed that her daughter never left her alone, but exerted her utmost powers to cheer and support her. She entered kindly into all the hopes and fears of Naomi which related to Marcellus, and rejoiced in the prospect of confiding her to the care and protection of one whom she had always loved and esteemed. She was not so much prejudiced against his Roman birth as her husband was; and since Naomi had embraced the Nazarene doctrines, her mother rejoiced for her sake that she was betrothed to one who would respect her sentiments.

It was not however on the subject of her own prospects and her own interests that Naomi chiefly delighted to dwell when conversing with her mother. There was another and a higher theme, towards which she drew Salome's thoughts whenever they were alone; and it was a source of joy and gratitude to her when she found that the subject was no longer shunned. Salome had formerly avoided all discussions and arguments relating to the Christian faith, in compliance with the wishes of her husband, and because she did not desire to be convinced of the truth of what he so entirely despised and disbelieved. Nevertheless, the impression which had once been made on her mind in favour of the doctrines of the Nazarenes, by the conversation of Amaziah, and

her daughter, had never been entirely obliterated. The heroic constancy and faith that had been displayed in the conduct of the lamented Theophilus, had also most deeply interested her; and she could not help thinking that there must be some miraculous power in that faith which could thus disarm death and shame of their terrors, and make its disciples more than conquerors over all that naturally binds the heart of man to life.

When, therefore, her daughter resumed the subject after her return from Joppa, she was very willing to listen to her animated discourse. The more she heard of Jesus of Nazareth, the more was her gentle spirit inclined to believe the story of his love to fallen mankind, and to rest upon it for the peace and safety of her soul. During the dreary months of fear and horror that succeeded the entrance of Simon into the city, the necessary seclusion and retirement in which she and Naomi lived, gave her ample time to hear and to reflect on all the wonders that it was her daughter's happiness to relate, and she did not hear in vain. The earnest, the constant prayers of Naomi were heard in her behalf, and the spark of faith at length was kindled in her heart. Faint and flickering it burned, and it seemed that a single blast of opposition would have extinguished it; but he who doth not "break the bruised reed, nor quench the flame of smoking flax," was merciful to this feeble disciple, and spared her those trials which she was not yet able to bear.

Zadok was fully engrossed by his political and his priestly occupations; and during the short intervals which he passed with Salome, he exerted himself to cheer and encourage her spirits, and chase away the fears that oppressed her; and he never questioned her as to the topic of her conversation with Naomi during his absence, nor did she ever mention it to him. She began to feel that the salvation of her soul was concerned in the question of the truth or falsity of Naomi's state-

ments, and she would not run the risk of having a termination put to those discussions that now so deeply interested her.

Some hours had been passed by the mother and daughter in considering and discoursing on the unhappy fate of Theophilus, and the believing hope which had supported him to the end, on the evening when Javan came from the conflict beneath the temple walls, and sought the society of his family. Their conversation had already been interrupted by the arrival of Mary and their little favourite David, who was now bounding along the terrace, and trying to engage Naomi to pursue him and join in his gambols. He ran laughing over the marble pavement, looking back at his young friend, who exerted herself to banish more serious thoughts that she might amuse the lovely child, when his course was arrested by the entrance of Javan and his father. They abruptly crossed his path, and the stern expression of Javan's countenance put a sudden stop to his mirth and Naomi's efforts at gaiety. There was something in the childish look of fear with which David regarded the young Pharisee that touched his heart and grieved him. "Am I," thought he, "an object of terror to all around me? and do even children dread my presence?"

He stooped down, and raised the little boy gently in his arms, while he whispered to him, "Why are you afraid of me, David?"

"Because my nurse tells me that you killed poor Theophilus," replied the child, in a trembling voice.

Javan set him down again on the pavement, and a dark cloud came over his brow. "Then I am looked on as a murderer!" he muttered: "this shall not be."

He approached his mother and Naomi; and though they tried to meet him with affectionate cordiality, yet there was a restraint in their manner, and a quiver on their lip, that told him plainly how his presence recalled

the memory of the departed Theophilus, and how entirely the innocent child had spoken their feelings in attributing to him the death of his cousin. He was growing weary of the scenes of strife and bloodshed in which he had lived since his return to the metropolis with Simon. His zeal in the cause of the son of Gioras had not abated, nor his resolution to dedicate his life, if necessary, to the restoration of the peace and prosperity of his beloved city; but when the daily conflict was over, he had often wished that he could retire to his home in the confidence of being received as a welcome visitor. He longed to find in the society of his family, whom with all his faults he sincerely loved, a respite from the cares and anxieties that weighed on his mind, and to forget for a time the spectacles of horror and vice that met his eyes while he was actively engaged in carrying on the siege of the temple, or traversing the streets to prosecute some scheme of his crafty chieftain's. The conviction that he had lost all the esteem which he had enjoyed among his immediate relatives from his cruel persecution of his amiable cousin, had made his home disagreeable to him, and he would have made great sacrifices to regain his former place in his family. Perhaps even now it was in his power to remove a part of the stain that rested on his character, and to make his sister at least look on him more kindly.

While he was absorbed in reflections that seemed in some degree to chase away the gloom that had so long rested on his countenance, Naomi had passed to the other end of the terrace, in compliance with the earnest entreaty of little David; and having descended the marble steps that led into the flower-garden, was occupied in weaving a chaplet of bright and fragrant flowers to adorn his curling hair. Javan followed her, and as he approached the graceful vase from which she was gathering clusters of rich blossoms, and contemplated her sweet countenance, and the animated, joyful face of

the little David, a smile of unwonted cheerfulness played on his features. He stood silently by her side until her task was done, and then sent the delighted child back to his mother and Salome to claim their admiration of his flowery crown. How lovely he looked! His bright beaming countenance and joyous spirit seemed to promise years of innocence and happiness. Alas! his beauty was like that of the flowers he wore—so sweet, so delicate, and so short-lived!

Javan and Naomi walked together in the garden below until the daylight had faded away, and the stars of night were glittering in all their splendour in the dark blue vault of heaven. The other members of their family had retired to the house, as they feared the effects of the night-air on the delicate frame of Salome. Their curiosity was greatly excited by the earnest and protracted conference between the brother and sister; and when at length they joined them in the cedar-hall, they were struck with surprise and pleasure at the unusual degree of cheerfulness that reigned on the countenances of both; nor did the concluding words of the conversation which reached their ears, as Naomi and her brother crossed the adjoining vestibule, give them any clue to the cause of the change.

"For six months, Naomi—remember, you have given me your solemn promise."

"I will not break it, Javan," she replied, "though you have put me to a severe trial."

The evening meal passed off with unwonted gaiety, for Naomi, the life and joy of her family, had resumed much of her former spirits, and her parents were happy in seeing her so, though they were ignorant of the cause.

CHAPTER XIX.

JERUSALEM had been left in a state of awful suspense during the interval between the arrival of Titus at Cæsarea and the march of the Roman army. But that suspense soon terminated, when the news was brought by some fugitives that the countless host were moving through Samaria, and ere many days could elapse would be before the walls of the capital.

They advanced slowly towards the city, and encamped in the valley of Thorns, near a village called Gaboth-Saul, on the hill of Saul, about three miles from Jerusalem. One evening, while yet the anxious inhabitants watched from the walls and towers, in expectation of seeing their invincible foes approaching, they perceived a single horseman coming swiftly along the valley of Jehosaphat, bearing in his hand a white flag in token of his pacific intentions. He crossed the brook Kedron, and rode up to the water-gate, where he called to the officer on guard in the Jewish language, and requested a moment's parley with him. The officer complied, and the gate was cautiously opened, when he saw a young man of noble and ingenuous aspect, who courteously saluted him, and begged that he would take charge of a small packet, which he put into his hand, and permit one of his men to deliver it safely according to the superscription. He also presented him with a gold coin of great value, with a request that it might be given to the bearer of the packet, as an inducement to him to be faithful and swift. Then he bowed gracefully to the

officer, and retired at full speed from the gate, for he probably knew that he was in a situation of considerable danger, and that he might be assailed by the shafts and spears of the fierce soldiers who thickly covered the wall above him.

The officer retained the gold for himself, for avarice had spread widely among the corrupted troops; and he gave the packet to one of his guard, with an order to carry it as directed. The man thrust it carelessly into his vest, and it was not until the following night that it reached its destination. Naomi was retiring to rest, when Deborah entered her chamber and presented to her the sealed parcel, on which was written, in characters well known to her, "To Naomi, the daughter of Zadok the priest;—with speed." The curiosity of the old domestic kept her in the room while her young mistress tore open the envelope, and hastily perused one of the two letters which it contained. Deborah watched the changing colour of Naomi's cheek, and the tear that started to her eye, but she did not interrogate her, for she knew that the manuscript came from Marcellus; and she retired, leaving the agitated girl to read the letter again and again, and tremble equally for the safety of her betrothed, and that of her parents and herself.

The letter of Marcellus contained repeated assurances of his affection, and his anxiety to rescue his affianced bride from the danger that was so rapidly coming on her countrymen. He detailed the force and numbers of the Roman army, and declared the firm resolution of Titus, to persist in the siege until Jerusalem should be in his power. And then, with all the eloquence of love, he besought her to obtain the permission of her parents to leave the wretched city, and take refuge under his father's protection. He added that if she and her faithful Deborah could escape into the valley of Jehosaphat, he and Rufus would meet her and escort

ner to the camp, where Titus himself had promised to provide her with a strong guard, and send her in safety to the dwelling of an honourable friend of his own at Cæsarea. Marcellus further expressed an ardent wish that Salome could be persuaded to accompany her daughter; but he knew that no consideration would induce her to leave her husband, and that Zadok would die a hundred deaths rather than desert his post in the city at a time of such peril. He minutely pointed out the spot where he hoped she would meet him, in her father's garden by the brook Kedron, at which place he said that he and his father would wait each night for her appearance, with a litter and swift horses, to bear her and her nurse away in safety; and he besought her to lose no time in making up her mind to the step which he proposed, as the operations of the Roman army would be prompt and decisive, and in a few days all possibility of his rescuing her might be gone. Much more was added, and many arguments used to induce the Jewish maid to leave the home of her fathers, and escape the inevitable doom of her rebellious countrymen; but it was all to no purpose. Naomi shed tears over the expressions of Marcellus's devoted attachment, and she felt he had but too much cause to fear that if she remained in Jerusalem she might share in its destruction; and yet her purpose was unshaken. Her mother was in declining health, and could she leave her? The light of heaven was breaking upon her mother's soul through her means, and could she abandon her? No; she resolved that she would not even mention the proposal of Marcellus to her parents, lest anxiety for her removal from the city should induce them to urge her acceptance of it. She therefore concealed the letter, and opened the other which accompanied it, and which she found to be from her poor friend Claudia, who had sent it to her brother, in the hope that he would find some means of conveying it to Naomi. She did not anticipate that he

would run so great a risk as to approach the walls of Jerusalem himself in order to convey the letter, or she would never have given him such a commission. But Marcellus had been too eager to make known to Naomi his plans for her preservation, and to obtain her immediate concurrence, for any thoughts of peril to deter him from the enterprise; and unknown to his commanding officer, he had ventured to the gate, and escaped unharmed.

The letter of Claudia was nearly to the following effect:—

"My beloved Naomi will believe with what satisfaction I avail myself of an occasion to write to her; and she will I know be equally pleased to receive tidings of those who love her dearly. A friend of Amaziah's is about to return to Judea, and will take charge of my letters, and convey them to the Roman camp, from whence doubtless Marcellus will be able to forward this scroll to you. Oh that I could myself be the bearer of the intelligence which it will contain! Dear Naomi, my heart is buried at Jerusalem, and I feel myself a sad exile while I dwell so far from all those scenes that are consecrated to my memory. There have I passed all the happy days of my eventful life. There was I blessed with the affection of my martyred Theophilus; and there did I hear from him of all the things pertaining to salvation. There too I enjoyed your society and friendship, and could strive to imitate, however humbly, the piety and virtue and courage that made me love the religion that you professed. Can I avoid looking back with sorrow and regret to the days that are gone, and wishing that I had been permitted to tarry with you, and share your dangers? My life is now of little value, for all that made life precious is taken away from me; and it would have been a joy to me, if the Lord had suffered me to end my days within the gates of Zion, where he who would have been the

happiness of my life was so cruelly torn from me and murdered: but it is wrong, and very ungrateful in me, to speak thus. Bear with my sorrow, dearest Naomi, while for the first time I am enabled to give utterance to all I feel; and do not think that I repine against the dispensations of my God and Father, though I am bowed down beneath the weight of his chastening hand. No; I am enabled to bless that very hand which has wounded me, and to bear testimony to the love and kindness that have inflicted the blow; and I can even pray for mercy and pardon on him who was the cause of all my sorrow. I see now that I had made an idol of my Theophilus. Even the readiness with which I received the faith of Jesus was greatly owing to the interest I felt in all that *he* taught me, and the conviction that what *he* believed must needs be true and right. My soul was devoted to him more than to God, and now God has taken him away in mercy as well as justice, and has shown me how I leaned on a broken reed, and neglected the power of His own Almighty arm. I believe I can truly say, that my affliction has been blessed to me; and that I am now, through the unmerited grace of God, a more sincere Christian than when you and Theophilus used to commend my docility and faith. Oh, may the same grace still support me, and carry me forward to the end; that I may enter into the presence of God, clothed in the robe of my Saviour's righteousness, and be admitted to those realms of joy, where now my beloved Theophilus has joined the company of saints and angels, who sing around the throne. Pray for me, Naomi, that my faith may never fail again, and that my light affliction, which is but for a moment, may work for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory I will weary you no more with the detail of my feelings; but it has been a relief to me to express to my earliest and dearest friend both my weakness and my strength In Judith's presence I always

endeavour to restrain my grief, and to cheer her who is more than a mother to me. Both she and Amaziah are unremitting in their kindness; and I must not say that my life is of no value, when I think of their tenderness and affection for me. All the love they bore to their dear son seems now to be bestowed on me; and if I can in any measure console them for what they have lost, I will try to wish that my life may be prolonged. I have other blessings and other privileges here, for which I am grateful. I enjoy the society of many holy disciples of Christ, and am permitted to share their worship and partake of their sacraments; nay more, I have already frequently seen the most blessed apostle John. I have looked on that countenance so full of love and purity and zeal; I have listened to his words, while admiring crowds stood round in breathless silence, to catch the now feeble sound; and I have received his holy benediction, and felt his venerable hands laid kindly on my head. How I have wished for you, Naomi, to share the sacred delight I feel whenever his almost sacred form is before me! I cannot describe him to you, except by saying, that when I look on him I no longer wonder why he was the chosen, the beloved disciple above all the rest who followed their Lord. It is beautiful to see him leaning on his staff, his long white hair and beard flowing down upon his breast, and his eyes sparkling with all the animation of youth, while he pours forth a torrent of eloquence that must pierce the heart of all who hear him. The numbers that are added to the church here through his preaching is very great; and the famous image of Diana is robbed of many of its worshippers. I blush to remember that I was once among the ignorant multitude who believe that this image came down from heaven, and is endued with divine power. It stands in a temple, whose splendour is only surpassed by your own glorious edifice at Jerusalem. Oh, that it was dedicated to the worship of

the same only true God!—and that both were likewise consecrated to the service of his Son!

"This is a very beautiful city, and I was greatly struck with the splendour of the buildings on our first arrival. We had a very prosperous voyage from Joppa, and the weather was more favourable than we could have expected at that season. The sun shone brilliantly on the animated scene which was presented to us as we approached the city; and the steady motion of the ship, as we sailed up the river on which Ephesus is built, enabled me to stand on the deck and admire the beauty of the scenery on either side. We ascended the river for a short distance from the place where it falls into the bay, and the banks were covered with villages and noble houses, interspersed with trees of every description. The broad stream was filled with ships and boats; and nothing struck us with such feelings of surprise and delight as the shouts which we heard from some of the boatmen. 'Hallelujah!' was the cry which these Christian mariners used to call their companions to join in their labours; and 'Hallelujah!' was answered by the ploughmen in the adjoining fields, as the boat passed swiftly on. This glorious invitation to sing the praises of Christ is generally uttered by his disciples, in the course of their daily employments, as a signal to their brethren; and we are thankful to be in a land where the invitation is so frequently responded to in the same spirit that dictates it, and not followed by insult and persecution as it would be in Judea.

"Our faithful Hannah is well and happy. She is a great comfort to us, and tries by her activity and zeal to make a return to your uncle and aunt for all their kindness to her: she sends you her most respectful greeting. Judith and Amaziah salute you and your father and mother with sincere affection, and join with me in fervent prayers for your preservation and happiness both

here and hereafter. Pray, dearest Naomi, remember and love your attached friend—CLAUDIA."

This letter gave Naomi both pain and pleasure. She regretted to find how severely poor Claudia had been tried, and how much her spirit yearned for the society of the chosen friend of her childhood, as a consolation in her present afflictions; but she rejoiced also to perceive how much of true resignation and submission was evinced in the heartfelt expressions of piety that were mingled with the natural complainings of a wounded spirit. Oh, how would she have rejoiced to have had it in her power to minister comfort to her dear and afflicted friend! But that task she must leave to the God of all comfort; and she could only pray that in His own good time, when sorrow had worked its perfect work, He would pour balm into the wounded heart, and bind up the broken spirit.

Her next concern was to devise some method by which she could reply to Marcellus's letter, and put an end to his anxious expectation of meeting her by the waters of Kedron. The fear that he would nightly repair to the spot, and thus be exposed to great personal danger, determined her to lose no time in endeavouring to convey to him her firm determination to share the fate of her parents, while peril surrounded them on every side. Many were the plans which she devised, but all seemed equally impracticable; and after some hours of useless reflection, she retired to rest, with a resolution to apply to Deborah for counsel and assistance.

In the morning she summoned the good old nurse, and told her all her anxious wishes, and her reasons for concealing Marcellus's letter from her father and Salome. Deborah applauded her disinterested conduct and affectionate devotion to her parents, and entered warmly into all her schemes for conveying a despatch to the Roman camp; but none were suggested that pro-

mised any hope of success, until the nurse remembered that while Mary of Bethezob dwelt in Zadok's house, her favourite attendant, Reuben, had made many offers of service to herself and all the family, and had boasted of having held communication with a certain person in the Roman army who had been his friend in former years, by means which were both safe and sure. This deceitful man had endeavoured to ingratiate himself with Deborah, as the best method of discovering any circumstances relative to her young mistress which he could communicate to Javan. So well had he acted the part of a sincere friend to the family, so artfully had he feigned sorrow and indignation at the death of Theophilus, and so judiciously had he mingled the praises of Naomi with all his discourse, that the unsuspicious old woman put perfect confidence in his professions, and now assured her young mistress that she might safely confide her packet to him, with every hope of its speedily reaching its destination.

Naomi knew nothing of Reuben, except that he was a confidential servant of Mary's. She had often remarked him, and thought his countenance singularly unprepossessing; but she was entirely ignorant how much of the affliction and sorrow which had of late visited her family had arisen from the treachery and cunning of this very man. She believed that she must have mistaken his character, and desired Deborah to see him as soon as possible, and ascertain whether he still possessed the power of holding intercourse with his Roman friend, and would undertake to convey her packet to Marcellus, for which service he should receive a handsome reward.

Deborah soon performed her errand, and returned to Naomi with the welcome intelligence that Reuben had promised to go himself to the appointed spot by the brook, and meet Marcellus that very evening, when he would deliver to him the letter. The despatch was soon

prepared and given to the artful Reuben by Deborah, with many charges for its safe conveyance. She desired him to come the following morning to claim his reward, and to give an account of his meeting with Marcellus. The traitor swore to be faithful, and departed. But whither did he bend his steps? To the dwelling of Simon the Assassin, a name which he had justly earned from those he came to protect and save.

The son of Gioras was engaged in consultation with Javan and several others of his partisans, when he was informed that a man at the gate desired to speak with him quickly and privately. An expression of doubt and suspicion crossed his dark brow, and he hesitated for a moment whether to comply with the stranger's request or not. He knew that he was hated by many, and feared by all; and he had reason to believe that there were many in Jerusalem who would sacrifice their lives to rid their city of the scourge that their own folly had brought upon them. Yet the man might have tidings for his ear alone, and his crafty policy had often recourse to the employment of spies and informers. He took up a dagger that lay on the table before him, and placed it in his girdle, with a look that told how readily it would find its way to the heart of any one who should attempt to injure him, and left the hall.

Reuben was brought before the tyrant, who waited to receive him in a small private apartment; and guards with naked swords stood ready in the anteroom to do the bidding of their chief. Simon motioned to the informer to remain at a distance, and sternly demanded his errand. Reuben quailed beneath the fierce scowl that met his gaze, as he lifted up his own usually downcast eyes, and showed a countenance as dark and as artful, but not so bold as that of the assassin.

"My Lord," he said, "I come to do you service. Here is a letter that will tell you how to rid Jerusalem of one at least of her bravest enemies."

He laid the sealed packet on a marble slab near him, and retired to the furthest corner of the room, for he had even less desire than Simon to come into close contact with his companion. He had intended to stipulate for a reward of his treachery before he gave up the document: but there was something in the eye of the son of Gioras that made him forget his avarice, and think only of escaping from his presence as quickly as possible.

Simon took up the letter, and with his dagger divided the silken cord that fastened it round, and to which the seals were attached. He retained the weapon in his hand; and while he read the letter he seemed also to keep a watch on the movements of Reuben, who eagerly waited for the moment of his dismissal. The artless epistle of Naomi proved to the chieftain that his informer had not deceived him, for the expressions it contained could not have been the production of cunning or design; but he did not choose to set the stranger free until he had both arranged and executed the scheme which his information had suggested, for he who had betrayed one trust could not be depended on, even in his treachery. He called for his guards, and commanded them to take charge of Reuben, and keep him in security until he should give further orders concerning him in the evening. He desired that he should be well treated, but not allowed to hold communication with any person whatever until that period. The trembling menial now repented of his treachery, and sincerely wished that he had never engaged in the business which had brought him into so perilous a situation; but his faltering entreaties were of no avail: he was led away and carefully secured in a chamber by himself, where he was left to his very disagreeable reflections for many hours.

Meanwhile Simon considered whether he should make known to Javan the information he had received, and consult with him as to the best means of seizing on the unsuspecting young Roman and his brave and

distinguished father. Javan had on some recent occasions shown a less sanguinary spirit than he had given him credit for, and had even pleaded for mercy, where fanaticism and prejudice were not excited against the intended victims. But Simon could hardly doubt of his willingness to assist in an enterprise that promised the capture of a Roman officer, who had dared to propose to a Jewish maid that she should forsake her home and her parents, and fly to the camp of her country's foes. Naomi's letter did not enable Simon to discover that the writer of it was the sister of his zealous adherent Javan, for no name was subscribed to it; but it gave him cause to suspect, from some pious expressions of hope and confidence which it contained, that the damsel who thus held a correspondence with the enemy was a Nazarene, and that he whom she addressed was also a member of that detested religion. This circumstance made him decide on entrusting Javan with the secret, and he sent to desire his immediate presence. The letter was put into his hand as soon as he entered the room, with a brief explanation of the manner in which it had been received; and Javan recognised his sister's peculiarly beautiful handwriting. His colour came and went, and the compression of his lip, and strong contraction of his brow bespoke the painful emotions which were excited by the perusal. Simon watched his countenance, and wondered at the powerful excitement depicted there.

"Ha! my friend," he said, "this effusion of a Jewish maiden's love for a Gentile foe moves you to wrath. It is well; you will the more readily give me your counsel and your assistance in punishing the audacious Roman, and discovering which of the daughters of Zion has been found so weak and criminal as to bestow her affections on an infidel. It is evident that they have long been acquainted, and have carried on their iniquitous attachment for a considerable time; but as yet the girl has

resisted the solicitations of the Roman to fly with him from her parents. We must secure him, Javan. We must secure him this very night, and force him by tortures to confess what unhappy maiden he has thus beguiled from her duty as a child of Israel. And mark these concluding passages, Javan—do they not betoken the writer to be a believer in the crucified impostor, and that the man she thus so sinfully loves is of the same obnoxious creed?"

"Yes, Simon, I see and comprehend it all. And this maiden is my sister—my beautiful and once holy sister Naomi, who was then the object of my pride, and the hope and joy of our family. I knew that her soul had been polluted with the vile doctrines of the Nazarenes, —I knew also that the childish attachment that once subsisted between her and the son of Rufus the centurion was not effaced from her memory by his long absence from Jerusalem. But I never dreamed of this shame. She met Marcellus lately when she went to Joppa with my father. I knew it, but I was so much engaged with public affairs that it passed from my thoughts again, and I never inquired whether he had sought to gain her affections. Indeed the very fact that she had embraced the Nazarene heresy made me feel secure, for I knew that she would never bestow her hand or her heart on any one who differed from her in religion. I did not suspect that this Roman infidel would basely pretend to share her creed in order to obtain her love. He shall, however, meet the just punishment of his audacity and his hypocrisy. He has affected to be a Christian, and he shall die the death of a Christian. Thus shall we escape all possibility of the disgrace which he would bring upon us. My father must be informed of this; and doubtless he will take decisive measures to prevent all further correspondence between his daughter and the Gentile youth, even if we should fail to secure him this evening. But, Simon, no injury must be attempted

against Naomi. She is my sister, and though I love but few of my fellow-creatures, I do love her. She must be spared, and given time to repent, and to save her immortal soul."

"I care not for the foolish maiden," replied the fierce son of Gioras, "so that we get possession of this bold young soldier and his father. I have heard of Rufus, and I doubt not that his son is as worthy of an enemy's death as the old centurion."

"He always was courageous even to foolhardiness," replied Javan; "but he has no deep subtlety or profound cunning to devise and carry on a plot. I marvel how he has deceived my sister, who has so much quickness and penetration, and made her believe that he has abandoned his heathen idols, and adopted the no less impious worship of the Nazarenes. It is for this that he must die. As an enemy to Jerusalem I scorn him, and the vaunted troop to which he belongs. Let us go forth and organize a chosen band on whom we can depend for our enterprise this evening. They will meet with a gallant resistance unless they can fall on these Romans by surprise."

Javan and the chief captain left the house and repaired to the scene of contest that was almost incessantly maintained beneath the temple walls. There, amidst the noise and carnage that surrounded them, they selected from among the followers of Simon a strong body of resolute and powerful men, whom they commanded to be in readiness at sunset, and to repair at that hour to the water-gate, where they should receive further directions, and be led to the spot where their best services would be required.

The intervening hours were passed as usual in fierce and murderous conflict between the rival factions, in which nothing was gained by either party, and much blood and strength were wasted that should have been reserved for the defence of the city against the common enemy.

Before the blazing sun had sunk behind the western hills the chosen company were assembled at the appointed gate; and ere long they were joined by their commander and Javan. Simon gave the order for the heavy gate to be thrown open, and they all passed through and descended to the thick and fertile gardens that still lay uninjured along the lovely banks of Kedron. There the men were disposed among the dark trees and shrubs in such positions as would enable them to intercept the retreat of any persons who should enter the garden of Zadok. The signal was arranged by which Javan should give them notice to make the attack, and with the last rays of departing daylight the wily son of Gioras returned to the city, leaving the execution of the plot in the hands of his friend.

He passed along the dusky streets, now silent and deserted, for the peaceable inhabitants feared to venture beyond their own doors after sunset; and those of the combatants on either side who were not engaged in keeping a watch on the motions of their opponents, had retired to seek a short repose after the fatigues of the day. The silence was only interrupted by the occasional shouts of those bands of robbers who nightly issued forth to commit fresh acts of violence, and strike fresh terror into the hearts of the wearied and miserable inhabitants. Simon looked around him as he ascended the narrow street that led from the water-gate towards the centre of the town, and when he entered the spacious court in which his own dwelling was situated, he paused to contemplate the desolate scene around him. Not a human being was moving in that magnificent area which was wont to be thronged with a gay and busy populace; but on the pavement lay many a mangled and unburied corpse, slain by the swords and the daggers of their own countrymen, and left a prey to the hungry and ferocious dogs that prowled day and night through the city, and contended fiercely for the unnatural meal. Scarcely a

light glimmered forth from the windows of the magnificent dwellings that composed the square. Every gate and every door was closed and strongly barred, to guard against the intrusion of robbers and assassins; while the inhabitants sought, in the most retired of their apartments, a temporary cessation of suffering and alarm.

"When," exclaimed Simon, as he contrasted the present and the past conditions of the glorious city, "when shall Zion again resume her throne, and sit as the queen of nations! Her crown is in the dust—her children are in sadness and in shame—her enemies roar against her as a young lion. But they shall not prevail. The lion of the tribe of Judah shall yet appear in time to succour her, and her foes shall be driven away as the chaff before the wind. Why, O great Messiah! is thy coming so long delayed?"

The son of Gioras was interrupted in the loud expression of his wild and visionary hopes by the sudden apparition of the mysterious prophet. He emerged from the dark shadow of a neighbouring portico, and attracted perhaps by the voice of Simon, he crossed the square and approached him, chanting, in his usual sad, unearthly tone:

> "Woe to the bloody and rebellious city;
> And woe to those who dwell therein!
> Woe to thee, Simon! Woe to the great assassin!
> A voice against Jerusalem and against the temple;
> A voice against the whole people!
> Woe, woe, woe!"

Simon's feelings were excited by his own lofty expectations to which he had just given utterance; and the boding note of the prophet sounded discordantly on his ear. Many times had he heard his voice before, and once he had cruelly commanded him to be scourged, in order to silence his melancholy cry, though without the least effect; but never had his burden of woe sunk into his own spirit with a feeling of awe and dread until

this night, and he resolved that it should move him thus no more.

"Thy woes be to thyself, thou false prophet," he cried, "and thy curses light on thine own head! There, I send thee to the prince of darkness, whose messenger thou art; and tell him that Zion defies him, and all the powers he can send against her. The Lord of Hosts is with us."

As he uttered this daring and ill-founded boast, he cast a spear at the son of Ananus, who stood calmly listening to his words of wrath. The weapon flew with violence, and Simon expected to see his victim fall on the ground transfixed. But it passed harmless by, as though the prophet were gifted with a charmed life. Simon drew his sword, and rushed on the wasted form before him; but with a speed that mocked his utmost efforts at pursuit, the son of Ananus fled away, and even in his flight continued to exclaim:

"Woe to the great assassin!
Woe, woe, woe!"

Breathless and exasperated, Simon returned and entered his house, with vows of vengeance on the man who had thus denounced him and then eluded his arm. He issued strict orders that very night that the wild prophet should be diligently searched for the next day, and brought in fetters to his presence.

"I will silence his ominous croaking," he continued, "nor suffer him any longer to go about our city adding to the terrors of the people, and shaking their faith in the coming deliverance that is so surely revealed."

CHAPTER XX.

The Roman army was encamped in all its strength and glory in the Valley of Thorns. From the neighbouring heights the towers and walls of Jerusalem were distinctly visible, and many times did Marcellus ascend to the highest summit and gaze with intense anxiety towards that part of the city where the dwelling of Zadok was situated. Oh! what dangers would he not have encountered to find himself under that well-known roof, and thus be permitted to protect and save his beloved Naomi, or perish with her in the destruction which he well foresaw was rapidly approaching! It was impossible for him, under any pretext, to enter the city, and therefore he had ventured—though with fears and doubts as to the reception of his proposition—to address to Naomi the letter which has already been mentioned, and which did not reach her hand until the day after it was delivered by him to the officer on guard at the gate.

It has been seen what was the nature of her reply, and how, by the treachery of Reuben, it came into the possession of the cruel Simon, instead of reaching him for whom it was intended. Marcellus hardly hoped that Naomi would be able to send him any answer, but he failed not to repair to the appointed spot, accompanied by his kind-hearted father and a chosen band of soldiers on the evening of the same day on which he had carried the packet of letters to the city gate. Of course he waited in vain for any communication from Naomi that

night, for his letter was then lying unheeded in the folds of the careless soldier's garment, and the same disappointment met him the following evening also. Nevertheless he was not discouraged, but he resolved to go again and again to the garden of Zadok, so long as it was possible for the object of his anxious care to come forth from the dangers that surrounded her. and claim his protection. Rufus also attended his son each night, that if the maiden should venture to meet them, she might have the comfort and the sanction of his presence.

The third evening arrived; and again Marcellus and his companions left the camp, and proceeded by a secluded path over the hills to the valley of Jehosaphat. The short twilight had almost faded away when they crossed the brook and entered the garden, and the overhanging trees, now thick with luxuriant foliage, effectually concealed them from the observation of the guard who patrolled along the wall of the city. They remained silently watching for some time, when at length they heard the sound of footsteps softly approaching, and the name of Marcellus uttered in a low whisper. The young soldier paused not to ascertain from whose lips the welcome sound proceeded; he did not doubt that it was either Naomi or her attendant who called him, and he sprang forth to meet her. The night was cloudy and dark, and for a moment Marcellus did not discover the deceit that had been practised upon him. He saw indistinctly a group of persons among the shrubs and flowers, and he believed that his beloved was in the midst of them, awaiting his approach. He hurried forward, exclaiming,

"Where are you, my Naomi? Haste, haste, and let us bear you away to safety."

"Audacious Roman!" replied Javan, fiercely; "Naomi is safer than with heathens and idolaters. You shall soon be within the same proud walls that guard her from

danger, but you shall no more have power to tempt her by your arts to forget her father's house and her father's God!"

So saying, Javan rushed upon the astonished young Roman, while his attendants commenced a furious conflict with Rufus and his followers. The Jewish party were the most numerous; but the Romans were superior in their weapons, and they fought with a desperate resolution to defend their officers, to whom they were devotedly attached. Several were wounded on both sides, and the noise of the combat attracted the attention of the guard who were stationed at the nearest gate. They quickly assembled in a strong body, and sallied forth to the assistance of Javan, and in a few minutes the brave company of Romans must have been surrounded and defeated, had not Clodius, who was one of the number, perceived the glancing of the Jewish army through the trees, and guessed that fresh enemies were approaching. The moment he had discovered that Javan was the leader of their antagonists, he had rushed towards him, in the hope of revenging the breach of faith of which the Jew had been guilty towards him, when he escaped so treacherously from his custody while a prisoner in the Roman camp. All his efforts were directed against him alone, and he would gladly have sacrificed his life if he could have slain Javan also. Probably he would have succeeded in his desperate attempt, had he not observed the coming reinforcement; but then his attachment to Marcellus outweighed his private animosity, and leaving the scene of conflict, he flew back to the spot beyond the brook where the horses and the litter had been placed ready for the expected removal of Naomi beyond the reach of pursuit.

He seized the horses of Rufus and Marcellus, and in an instant returned to the spot where they were contending for liberty and life, calling loudly to them at

the same time to mount and fly before the Jewish guard should arrive and overpower their small band. They disengaged themselves from their antagonists, and sprang on their gallant steeds; but they did not then desert their devoted followers. With desperate valour they covered their retreat, and by the strength of their well-trained chargers drove back their assailants and kept them at bay, until they were joined by the band who came to their aid. By that time all their own men were mounted, when, as the Jews rushed forward with their combined force, Rufus gave the word of command, and the undaunted troop of Roman cavalry were in a moment scouring down the valley, far beyond the reach of their enemies' swords or lances.

Javan's rage and disappointment knew no bounds. All regard to his sister's feelings—all the compassion that had once been excited by the fate of Theophilus and the sorrow of his relatives—were forgotten, and he burned to plunge his sword to the heart of the Roman who had won the affection of Naomi, and escaped the chastisement which such presumptuous boldness deserved at the hands of every true son of Abraham. He returned with his discomfited followers to the city, and immediately repaired to the house of Simon, to inform him of the ill-success of their enterprise. The chieftain was almost as much disappointed as his colleague, for he had ardently desired to get the brave centurion and his noble son into his power. But his expectations, and those of Javan, had failed; and now they could only endeavour to keep the attempt a secret from Naomi. Reuben was summoned from his place of confinement, and made to swear that he would never reveal the occurrences which had taken place; and then Javan commanded him to go to Deborah in the morning, as had been agreed, and claim the promised reward for his faithful performance of the commission entrusted to him. He directed him to assure her that he had himself seen

Marcellus in the garden, and given her young mistress's letter into his own hand, and witnessed his grief and disappointment at reading its contents. The wily Reuben promised to use great discretion and subtlety in preventing the suspicions of Deborah, and left the house, rejoiced to find himself again at liberty and safe from the custody of the terrible Simon.

He told his well-invented story to the credulous old Deborah, who instantly gave him the liberal reward that was intended as a recompense for his fidelity, and hastened to communicate to Naomi the supposed success of her mission. Naomi was satisfied. She grieved for the sorrow which she had caused to Marcellus, but she felt that she had acted according to the dictates of her own conscience and her strong sentiments of filial piety; and she tried to banish all selfish regrets, by hastening to the apartment of her beloved mother, and devoting herself as usual to her comfort. In the effort to cheer her spirits, which had lately become most deeply depressed, she forgot all her own peculiar causes of anxiety, and found a reward for every personal sacrifice in observing that while she conversed with her, and cautiously spoke of her own hopes in her Redeemer, and her own consolation in every trial, the countenance of Salome became more animated, and her sadness gradually passed away. Oh if the interest which her mother already appeared to feel in the wondrous scheme of redemption through Jesus Christ might be deepened and strengthened, and at length, by the grace of God, become a steadfast and a saving faith—what joy would be hers! How gladly, to further that all-important object, would she forego all hopes of earthly happiness for herself, and patiently wait for a glorious reward in Heaven, where all her cares and sorrows would end, and where she might be permitted to meet him who now possessed her affections, to be separated no more for ever!

She looked on the pale cheek and wasted form of

Salome, and blessed God that she had refused to leave her or even to let her know that an asylum of perfect safety had been offered to her. Salome expected and dreaded the result of the attack of the Roman army; and often she shuddered to think what might be the fate of her cherished and beloved child if the Gentile conquerors became masters of the city. She felt that her own strength was declining rapidly, and she believed that ere that terrible event took place her eyes would be closed in death, and behold not the destruction that ever attended a Roman conquest. But how much more peacefully would she have awaited death if she could have known that Naomi was safe with those who had power to protect her and make her happy!

All these anxious fears were not concealed from Naomi, and therefore it was that she refrained from telling her mother of the letter she had received from Marcellus. But she read to her the epistle of Claudia; and from the expressions of Christian faith and resignation which it contained, she took occasion to speak of the blessed peace that was to be found in the Gospel doctrines, and the support which they afforded to every sincere and humble believer, under all the most trying dispensations of Providence.

"Naomi, my child," said Salome, with an expression of anxious doubt on her countenance, "it is from listening too much to your discourse on those subjects that I have lost the peace that once possessed my soul. While my faith in the holy religion which we have received from our fathers, and which was taught by God himself, was unshaken, I was tranquil and satisfied. I fulfilled all the requirements of the law as far as I was able, and trusted to the merit of the appointed sacrifices to atone for my deficiencies in the eyes of a holy and a merciful Jehovah. But now that trust is gone. I have begun to feel that the blood of lambs and goats cannot wipe away my many and grievous sins, and my soul is tossed

with fear and doubt. I cannot put my confidence in the crucified Jesus so fully as you would have me do; I cannot cast myself, and all the burden of my sin, on him, in full assurance of pardon, for my faith in him is very weak. Oh that I could surely know that he was indeed the promised Messiah!"

"My dearest mother," replied Naomi, "I bless my Heavenly Father for the words you have spoken. Surely He hath begun the work of salvation in your soul, and He will accomplish it to the end. Your very doubts and fears are an evidence that his Holy Spirit is striving with you; and I shall yet see you among his believing people, enjoying that peace which was the gift of Jesus to his disciples, and which nothing in this world can either give or take away."

"May God grant it, Naomi," said Salome, in a dejected tone, but I never expect to feel perfect peace on earth. I have lived for many years in contempt of the Saviour whom you would have me to worship, and serve, and love as a God. And if he is indeed the Christ, how can I hope that he will pardon my past neglect, and accept a faith so poor and weak as mine? I shall not live to prove whether it is sincere or not; and I dare not say that if I met with persecution or even opposition for his sake, I should have strength to confess him and to maintain my belief. Oh no, Naomi; my heart is not like yours or our poor Theophilus's—and Jesus must despise it."

"Oh say not so, dear mother," said Naomi: "you have more faith in your Redeemer than you allow yourself to believe. Were it not so, you would not be so anxious to be pardoned and accepted by him. And were your doubts tenfold more powerful than they are, Jesus would not turn his face from you, for he has promised to receive *all* who come to him in sincerity, and *in no wise* to cast them out."

"While I hear you tell of his condescending mercy

and love to sinners, I always feel comfort, Naomi: but when I am alone and remember my own utter unworthiness, then I doubt whether that mercy and love can extend to me. I have sinfully neglected him, and even striven to banish from my mind the impression that long ago your conversation and that of Amaziah made on me. I feared to displease your father more than the God of my salvation; and preferred a blind confidence in the superiority of that religion which he professed, to a diligent inquiry into the truth of the Christian doctrines. I did not even at that time pray that I might be led into the right way, for I wished to remain in the Jewish faith; and can I hope that such perverseness should be forgotten, and such hardness of heart pardoned? O Naomi, I have suffered much in the last few months. I do believe that the Lord has been striving with my spirit, though I resisted his influence; but day by day that influence has become stronger, and my desire to know the truth more urgent. While you and your father were absent at Joppa, I gave much time to meditation; and I believe I was sincere in asking my Heavenly Father to bring me to himself, and make me his own accepted child, however trying to flesh and blood might be the means which his love and wisdom should see necessary to wean my soul from all its false dependencies, and its attachment to the things of earth. I prayed also that the true way of acceptance with him might be made known to me; and that I might be taught to renounce all that was erroneous in the manner in which I had hitherto worshipped Him, and enabled to discover and embrace that faith which would make me pure in his eyes, and meet for the kingdom of Heaven."

"Then I no longer wonder, my dearest mother, that you have taken such an increased interest in the truths of our holy religion since that time. God has heard your prayer, and graciously inclined your heart to receive the light of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. I have

greatly rejoiced ever since my return home, to find that you not only permitted me to speak unreservedly of my Lord and Saviour, but that you took delight in the subject, and always seemed to be cheered and enlivened by it; but I did not know that this was in answer to your own supplications. Oh, I thank our merciful God who gave you the spirit to ask so humbly and sincerely, and then in his love and mercy granted your request."

"Yes, Naomi, it is all his work. If at last I am saved through Jesus Christ, what a monument of his goodness shall I be!"

"And is it not equally a miracle of grace, that any one of us should be saved?" replied Naomi. "Are not all of our fallen race by nature dead in trespasses and sins, until the Spirit of the Lord takes away our stony heart and gives us a heart of flesh? What pride, and presumption, and self-righteousness once defiled my whole soul; and yet did my Saviour call me to believe in him, and enable me to trust wholly and unreservedly to his merits for pardon and salvation! I have never known a single believer in Jesus who did not look on his own salvation as a wonder of grace and mercy, and those who have attained to the greatest degrees of holiness, and have been enabled in some degree to imitate the perfect example set forth by their Divine Master, have ever been those who have also most deeply felt their own natural depravity, and most gratefully acknowledged that all their attainments here, and all their hopes hereafter, were the free gift of God. Do not then, dear mother, doubt his power and willingness to save you: 'If the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctify to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God!'"

"Yes, my child, I believe indeed that Jesus has the power, and I will try also to believe that he has the will, to save and pardon even me. It is a wonderful thing that God should give his Son to die for us: and if that be really true, nothing is too great to expect from his love towards his sinful creatures."

"Oh, eternal thanks be to God," exclaimed Naomi, fervently, "for this confession of your faith in Jesus, as his Son, and your own Saviour, my mother! May he strengthen that faith day by day, and enable you to triumph in his great salvation."

"Naomi," replied Salome, "it is not in my nature to feel all that holy trust and confidence that seems to inspire your more ardent soul. While I remain in this world, I shall ever be subject to fears and timorous doubts. But pray for me, that my faith may not altogether fail—that I may be enabled to take comfort in it when the hour of death approaches, as it surely will ere long."

Naomi turned away to hide the rising tear that dimmed her eye at her mother's prophetic words. She was well assured that they were words of truth; and she had for some time past endeavoured to prepare herself for the bereavement that was rapidly approaching her; but she could not contemplate it without deep emotion, or watch the silent change that was taking place in that beloved mother's pallid countenance and wasting form, without feeling that all her trust in God would be required to enable her to bear the separation.

She paused a moment to regain her composure, and then replied,

"If it pleases our God and Father to take you to himself, he will support your faith, my mother, and give you victory over every fear and every temptation. Trust in Him, and Him alone, and he will be your guide ever unto death. His rod and his staff they shall

comfort you; and while you lean on Him for support, he will not suffer your foot to slide."

"Bless thee, my child," said Salome affectionately; "what a comfort has God given me in you! Nothing has so strongly shown me the power and the holiness of the religion which you now profess, as the change which it has worked in your character, and the spirit of joy and consolation and meekness and gentleness that it has imparted to you. When we meet hereafter before the throne of God, it will be my pride to remember that you, my Naomi, pointed out to me the way thither, and your bright example allured me into it."

"Cease, cease, dear mother!" cried Naomi: "oh, do not thus rob God of the honour that is all his own, to give any part to a sinful creature like me. If he has been pleased to make me the humble instrument of revealing to you the way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, to Him be all the glory and all the praise. Throughout eternity I will bless Him for the privilege, and declare my own unworthiness. Oh that I had grace and strength to act up to the spirit of those doctrines which I so feebly endeavour to impart to you! But I have need of teaching on every point; and were it not for the grace of my Redeemer, and the power of his Holy Spirit, I should fall into sin each hour of my life. How many are my provocations of Him every day, notwithstanding all his mercy to me! It is only by constant prayer that my sins may be blotted out afresh, and washed away in his atoning blood, that I can in any degree preserve my confidence that I am pardoned and accepted by Him. Let me entreat you to use the same humble means, and you too, my mother, will find rest to your soul, and be enabled to glory in the hope of your free forgiveness and everlasting glory."

"I have already found some consolation in prayer,

Naomi, since I have offered it in the name of Jesus. I can feel more confidence that God has pardoned me, when I am enabled to believe that his only Son has shed his blood to take away my sins, than when I trusted in the blood of sacrifices to make a propitiation for them. I see now that those sacrifices could never take away sin."

"They were but the types and shadows of the good things to come," answered Naomi, "and served to point out the one great sacrifice which should at length be offered. I would to God that our deluded nation would now see the worthlessness of all those forms and ceremonies that belonged to the old covenant, and would heartily embrace the new covenant which the blessed Son of God has revealed to mankind. It is a grief to my heart, a bitter grief, to see my dear and honoured father and my zealous brother yet in the bondage of the law, and despising the glorious liberty of the disciples of Christ. Their souls are in subjection to things which cannot profit them; and the zeal and devotion that would do honour to the cause of Him who died to save them, are devoted to the support of vain traditions and customs that are derived from men. They think to glorify Almighty God by their obedience to these customs of our fathers, but how much more acceptably would they honour Him by casting off their prejudices and receiving Jesus of Nazareth as his anointed Son O my dearest mother, will not you exert your influence to bring both my father and Javan out of the way of error?"

"I dare not speak to them on such a subject, Naomi. The words would die away unuttered. I am too weak in body and in spirit to contend with them, and they would but despise my feeble voice. Perhaps also their arguments would shake my own faith, which is so little established. I will pray for them, my child, as you have

prayed for me; and may God give the same success to my petitions."

Naomi forbore to urge her mother to attempt the conversion of Zadok and her son, for she saw how unequal she was to such an effort. Indeed the conversation which she had just held with her had exhausted her strength and excited her feelings more than she was well able to bear; and her daughter entreated her to seek repose on a couch which was always placed for her upon the terrace. This was a favourite situation with Salome, as it enabled her to enjoy the pure air that blew over the mountains of Olivet and the lovely view that extended beneath them. The terrace also was adorned with many a marble vase, in which grew beautiful and aromatic plants; and these were carefully tended by Naomi, and arranged near her mother's resting-place. It was a peaceful spot in the midst of that turbulent city; but even there the distant shouts of violence and conflict were heard, and Naomi brought her harp, that by its music and her own sweet voice she might draw away her mother's attention from the sounds of discord that always excited her fears and her grief.

She continued to sing in a low, gentle tone, until Salome, soothed by the sound and refreshed by the breeze, sank into a quiet sleep; when Naomi laid aside her harp, and indulged in grateful meditation on the discussion which she had just held with her mother. It is true the faith which she had heard her express was both weak and wavering—clouded with doubts and obscured by prejudices. Yet it was evident that she was sincere in her inquiry after the truth, and really desirous of knowing the will of her Heavenly Father, that she might do it. Therefore Naomi was very confident that her mother would not be long left in uncertainty as to the way in which she should seek the

salvation of herself; for Jesus himself had said, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." What comfort did the remembrance of this promise bring now to the heart of Naomi; and how earnestly did she thank her merciful Redeemer, who had left such words for the encouragement of all who seek him in sincerity, however small their knowledge or weak their faith! She trusted that her beloved mother would yet be spared for some time, and enabled, before she should be called hence, to make a full profession of her trust and confidence in the merits of her Saviour. She hoped that when her last hours should arrive they might be cheered and illumined by such a sense of pardon and acceptance as should deprive death of all its terrors, and make her more than conqueror over all that now she greatly dreaded; and that then, when life was fading away, and eternity appeared in all its awful reality, she might be able to lay aside her fears and scruples, and tell to Zadok on what her soul was trusting, and whence she derived her peace and joy. But should it please the Lord of life and death to hasten her mother's departure, and deny her the privilege of bearing a triumphant testimony in her dying hours to his power and will to save sinners, yet Naomi felt that she should have no fears for her salvation—no doubts that when her flesh and her heart failed, God would be the strength of her heart and her portion for ever.

"O God!" she softly ejaculated, "I thank Thee for this blessed hope! May I but hold my own faith steadfast unto the end of my pilgrimage; and then, when I stand before Thy throne, I shall see my mother, my own beloved mother, among the countless throng that shall assemble there, having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! But where, oh, where will my father be found in that great day? and where shall Javan stand? Can it be, O Lord Almighty!

that their blindness shall exclude them from Thy presence? Shall they suffer the wrath of the Lamb if they continue to despise his mercy? O Lord God, Thou knowest. Thou knowest how much of their blindness is wilful, and whether their hearts are upright in Thy sight; and Thou art very merciful."

Naomi buried her face in her hands, and wept. She could pray and hope for the conversion of those she loved so dearly, but the present state of their souls made her shudder. She knew that a heavy judgment was coming speedily upon Jerusalem—the hand of the avenger was already stretched forth to smite the city and her inhabitants; and there was but one way opened for escape—but one refuge into which sinners might flee and be safe for ever. That way was despised by Zadok, and hated and blasphemed by Javan—how could it then avail to save them? Naomi could not look into the decrees of God, or foresee what His providence should ordain concerning her father and brother. She could not look into their hearts and discover the degree of their responsibility and their guilt. She could only bow in trembling submission to His just decrees, and pour out her soul in fervent supplication that they might yet repent and be converted, ere the days of destruction should come, and there should be none to help them. She was still engaged in deep and anxious thought when Salome awoke, and looked up at her daughter with a smile of greater contentment and peace than Naomi had seen on her countenance for several months.

"I have been dreaming of former happy days," she said, "when you and Javan and our poor Theophilus were merry children playing together on this terrace; and Claudia and Marcellus were with us too. I was thoughtless, and well pleased to be so, at that time, Naomi; but I am happier now, in my present weak, declining state, with sorrows, and cares, and miseries around me, than I ever was while I was ignorant of what Jesus has

done for my soul. I dreamed just now that I saw you all in childish mirth, playing among the flowers at the end of the terrace; and while I looked at the joyous group, a bright and glorious being descended from above, and called to Theophilus to come out from the rest of his companions and prepare for Heaven. How joyfully the boy complied! and how gratefully he looked up to Him who had thus chosen him for himself! Then the heavenly visitant summoned you, my Naomi; and with equal readiness you left your childish sports, and I saw the light that shone from the divine countenance of him who called you reflected in your own. Marcellus and Claudia were both afterwards summoned: and I looked to see my son also placed in the chosen band; but no—he stood aloof, and though the same voice of mercy called to him, he did not move. The glorious being turned from him with a look rather of sorrow than of anger, and then he spoke to me. I did not heed his words at first, and many times he called me ere I even tried to rise and obey; but at length he came and took my hand and drew me forward, and placed me by your side. O then my eyes were opened, and I saw a multitude of angelic creatures around us, clothed in white; and they sang a song of triumph, because the Lord of their salvation had looked in mercy upon us also, and had joined us to their happy company. I looked for Javan and for Zadok that I might call them to join us, and share our felicity, but I could not see them—the terrace and all that I had seen before had vanished away; and then I woke with a feeling of peace that I have never known before. O Naomi, I believe that I shall soon realise that happy vision, and that all I love best on earth will be partakers of the same joy. If I did not trust that Zadok would surely be of the number, I fear that even the prospect of Heaven would not now make me feel satisfied. And Javan too—my poor mistaken son! His errors of faith have led him

into grievous sins. May the Lord pardon him the death of Theophilus! Your father's life has been one of devoted obedience to what he believed to be the will of God, and of unwearied benevolence to his fellow-creatures. Surely he will be accepted of the Lord, though he may die in ignorance of Him for whose sake alone his sins are pardoned and his obedience rewarded. But Javan gives me far more anxiety. His zeal is so mixed up with cruelty—his temper is so unhumbled—and his conduct so fearfully opposed to the love and mercy and charity that ought to characterize all pardoned sinners, that I cannot think of him without fear and dread. Oh, in what part of God's revealed will did he learn to persecute his own brethren? Where did he read that it was an acceptable offering to the Lord of all goodness to shed the blood of one who dwelt at peace with him, and worshipped the same God, and hoped for the same Heaven, though he differed from him as to the foundation of those hopes?"

"May his spirit be enlightened to see his errors," replied Naomi; "and may he yet find pardon. He was less cruel to Theophilus than you believe, mother. He thought he was making a last effort to save the soul of our poor cousin from the devices of Satan. I fear that much of personal animosity was mingled with that feeling, and urged him to execute his fatal enterprise against his liberty; but I do believe that his anger was softened and his hatred subdued after Theophilus was in his power. And when he saw his noble conduct, and witnessed his unshrinking courage, I do believe that he pitied and admired him, and regretted the step into which his own misguided zeal had hurried him."

"Then why did he not save his life, Naomi? Surely he had power to obtain his release."

"Alas, mother, pride and fanaticism forbade his openly pardoning a Nazarene, even if his hard-hearted col-

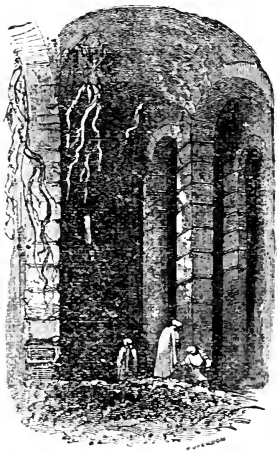
leagues would have consented to it. But speak to him on the subject, and hear his own feelings and his own thoughts; and you will pity him more, and perhaps blame him less."

As Naomi spoke Javan himself appeared on the terrace. His father had met him, actively engaged in the business of the civil warfare, and had told him with deep sorrow that his mother was far less well than when he had last seen her, and that he began to entertain very serious alarm about her. Javan was shocked at this announcement, for he really loved his mother; and though he had seen her look pale and feeble for some time past, he had not admitted the idea that her life was in danger. He eagerly inquired of Zadok whether the rabbi Joazer, who acted the part of a physician as well as of a spiritual adviser, in the family, considered her illness in so serious a light, and whether any further medical aid could be obtained in the city.

His father assured him that everything was done for the invalid that human skill could devise, but that he feared her naturally delicate constitution had suffered so much from sorrow and anxiety, that she would never rally again, though she might yet linger for a considerable time. This, he added, was also the opinion of the rabbi. Javan's heart smote him, for he remembered how much he had contributed, by his conduct towards Theophilus, and also by his harshness to Naomi, in harassing the mind of his gentle and affectionate mother, and laying on her a heavy burden of woe, which she had not strength to bear. He hastened homewards, and when he reached his father's house, of late so seldom visited by him, he felt a degree of remorse while he thought how he had been a cause of constant sorrow to its inmates, instead of being their support and joy. He proceeded to the terrace with softened feelings, and approached his mother with a kindness and gentleness of manner that were very unusual. Encouraged by this, Salome con-

versed freely with him; and Naomi, seeing that she looked tranquil and happy, left her with her son, while she retired to attend to some domestic arrangements with Deborah.

The conversation that ensued on her departure, between Javan and his mother, was extremely interesting; and whatever was the subject of it, it tended in a great degree to remove the gloom that hung on Salome's spirits; and Naomi found her more cheerful on her return than she had ever been since the apprehension of Theophilus, and all the sad scenes which had followed that unhappy event.



CHAPTER XXI.

Marcellus and his father reached the Roman camp in safety on the preceding night, when they escaped from the plan laid by Simon and Javan for their destruction. As they descended the hill that lay between Jerusalem and the Valley of Thorns, the vast encampment lay before them like a fortified city. A large space had been cleared and levelled by the pioneers; and there, in an incredibly short time, the camp was formed according to the usual plan of the Roman army. It was an exact square, and surrounded on every side by a strong rampart about twelve feet high, the top of which was armed with a line of almost impenetrable palisades; and a ditch, twelve feet wide and twelve deep, also ran at the foot of the rampart as a further security. These prodigious works were executed by the soldiers themselves, who were accustomed to use a spade or a pickaxe with almost as much readiness as a sword or spear, and were always kept employed in some useful manner by their commanders when not engaged in the actual duties of warfare. A vacant space of two hundred feet in width was left inside the ramparts, and the tents were pitched in the remaining portion of the vast enclosure. They were arranged so as to form broad and straight streets, and in the centre of the whole rose the lofty and magnificent pavilions of Titus, ornamented with the emblem of the eagle, so sacred in the eyes of every Roman soldier. A strong tower had been already erected at each corner of the camp, and the intervening space withinside the

rampart was lined with scorpions, catapultas, balistas, and other ponderous and dreadful engines of destruction. A handsome gate was placed in the rampart on each side of the encampment, sufficiently wide to admit the broad and heavy waggons and military carriages that attended the movements of the army; and also of strong detachments of troops sallying forth with unbroken ranks.

The strictest order and decorum were preserved throughout this populous camp, which were rigidly enforced by the general and his subordinate officers. The soldiers were summoned by the sound of trumpets to their regular meals, and the same signal warned them when it was time to retire to rest, or to arise and begin the business of the day. The clear blast of the evening trumpet was sounding through the camp when Rufus and Marcellus entered the gateway; and ere they reached the quarters of Titus the wide streets were almost deserted, and none remained abroad except those whose duty it was to patrol the different districts, and keep watch while their comrades slept.

The expedition in which Marcellus had that night been engaged was known and permitted by the general, with whom he was a great favourite. Titus had listened with considerable interest to the story of his attachment to the young Jewess, and would willingly have done anything in his power to rescue her from the dangers to which she must soon be exposed; but no open measures could be of any avail, and he could only hope that the scheme of his young friend might be crowned with success. He allowed him to take from the ranks of his own troop such a number of men as he might think sufficient for his purpose, and gave orders that he and his attendants should be permitted to pass unquestioned through the gates of the camp at any hour, either of the day or night. He had sympathized in the disappointment of Marcellus, when on the two

preceding evenings he had repaired to the garden in the Valley of Jehosaphat, and returned without any tidings of Naomi; but he encouraged him in his determination to visit the appointed spot on each following night, and wait in patient hope for better success. All that hope was now gone, and Marcellus hastened to his kind commander to communicate to him how all his expectations had been frustrated, and his fears that Naomi might even be subjected to oppression and restraint, in consequence of the discovery which had been made by her brother of his unsuccessful attempt to rescue her from impending evil.

The young soldier and his veteran father were immediately admitted into the presence of Titus, who was busily engaged in looking over plans and maps of Jerusalem and the surrounding country, and revolving in his mind the plans of future proceedings, and the best mode of commencing an attack on the rebellious city. He ceased from his employment on the entrance of his visitors, and heard the account of their meeting with Javan with attentive interest, and sincere commiseration with the mortified feelings of Marcellus. The only consolation which he could offer him was in the prospect of a speedy vengeance on the crafty Jew, and the possibility of saving and rescuing Naomi when the Roman arms should have conquered Zion, and a way should be opened for their entrance within her proud walls. But Marcellus knew that much of danger and suffering might befall his beloved Naomi long ere the courage and obstinacy of the Jews should be subdued, and the eagles glitter on the conquered towers of Jerusalem. He knew the unyielding and determined character of their opponents better even than Titus did, and he anticipated a long and desperate resistance to all their efforts. He shuddered at the idea of Naomi being exposed to all the privations and miseries, all the horrors and excesses of a besieged and vanquished city; and

he retired to his own tent for the night, with feelings of anxiety and dread that effectually banished sleep from his eyes.

The signal for rising and engaging in active employment was welcome to him; and after the first and most solemn occupations of the day had engaged his attention in the retirement of his tent, he gladly went forth among his comrades, and tried to forget his own personal anxieties in the zealous performance of those duties which fell to his lot in the discipline of the camp. It was the custom in the Roman army for all the soldiers to repair in the morning to the centurions of their respective bands, and offer to them a respectful salutation. The centurions paid the same compliment to the tribunes, and they in their turn waited on the general or commanding officer, to proffer their services, and receive from him the watchword for the day, and the orders which they were to deliver to their inferior officers. These forms were attentively observed in the camp of Titus, and the tribune who presided over that part of the army to which the equestrian troop was attached, was commanded to prepare six hundred horsemen for an expedition to reconnoitre the wall of the city that morning. He was also desired to inform Marcellus that his attendance was required in the general's tent. He gladly obeyed the summons, for he hoped to be allowed to take a part in the intended movement; and any occupation of that kind was preferable to passing his time idly in the camp, and indulging his own painful reflections.

He was not disappointed, for Titus immediately communicated to him his plans, and desired him to be in readiness to accompany him, as his personal attendant, in an hour's time. They sallied forth at the hour appointed, a gallant band of horsemen, splendidly mounted and equipped, and soon appeared on the summit of the heights that looked on the walls of Jerusalem. As they

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wound down the last declivities that sloped at the foot of the walls they gazed in astonishment at the turbulent city. Not a man appeared upon the battlements—not a sound of preparation for resistance or attack was heard; even the gates seemed to be deserted, and that scene of violence to be hushed in perfect peace and repose. Titus led his squadron to the right, and passing the angle of the wall which was guarded by the Women's Tower, to the north-east of the city, he filed off towards the Tower of Psephina, which occupied an important situation on the north-west side, near the upper fountain. Suddenly the gates behind him were thrown open, and a vast multitude rushed tumultuously forth, and threw themselves upon the troop of cavalry. Some succeeded in passing the squadron, and placed themselves across the road by which it was advancing, and others burst violently through their ranks and separated their enemies into two parties. Titus was cut off from the remainder of his troop, with Marcellus and a few other brave followers. He could not advance, for the ground before him was divided into orchards and gardens, fenced round with walls and deep ditches, besides broad watercourses that reached to the walls of the city. To retreat was almost as impossible, for thousands of his assailants crowded between him and his troops, to intercept his movements in that direction. Titus saw that the only chance of escape lay in a desperate effort of strength and courage. He called loudly to his men to keep close to him, and with Marcellus at his side he urged forward his noble steed and charged fiercely on those who opposed him. Hundreds of javelins and arrows were discharged at him, and every effort was made to obstruct his passage and secure his person; but though he wore neither helmet nor breastplate,—for he had not anticipated that he was going forth to battle,—yet he did not receive a single wound, but passed through the cloud of missiles unharmed. With his sword he cleared

a passage before him, while his well-trained charger crushed beneath his feet the wounded enemies who fell around. Marcellus bravely seconded him, and thus did they cleave their way through the dense mass that surrounded them and shouted for their destruction. The undaunted courage of Titus and his young companion excited the admiring wonder of the Jews. They exhorted one another to rush forward and secure the inestimable prize that seemed within their reach; yet still they shrank away from the rapid strokes of his bloody sword and the irresistible force of his fiery steed, as he slowly and steadily made his way through the crowd. His band of devoted followers formed around him as well as they could, and with a trifling loss the party at length reached the Valley of Thorns, and escaped from their pursuers. Two only were missing from this brave company—one had been surrounded, and with his horse pierced with countless arrows and javelins — the other dismounted incautiously, and was instantly overpowered and slain, and his horse led away in triumph into the city.

The exultation and joy of the Jews at this event were unbounded. It is true but a small advantage had been gained, yet they regarded it as the happy presage of future victory. Titus himself, the noble and all-conquering Titus, had been forced to fly, and nothing now seemed too great for their hopes and expectations. The news ran through the city with the speed of lightning, and the superstitious inhabitants hailed it as a token that the Lord would give them the victory, and that His arm would now be stretched out to save them. Javan shared the general enthusiasm, and with his pious father gave thanks to the God of Israel for this token of his favour and protection; and Simon thought it politic to encourage the same feeling among his troops. In his own cold calculating heart he trusted more to the strength of his army than to the invisible arm of Jehovah; but he knew that the Jews, however sunk in sin, and regard-

less of the laws of the God and their fathers, yet looked on themselves as his own peculiar people, whom he would save and defend from all those who sought their ruin. Therefore he joined with Zadok and his ardent son in openly ascribing the late signal success to the special interposition of their Heavenly Father, and in exhorting his men to courage and perseverance, under the assurance that the Divine aid would attend all their efforts, and enable them to baffle every attempt of their foes to deprive them of their freedom or their inheritance.

Zadok returned to his home that evening full of bright hopes and holy confidence, and he endeavoured to inspire Salome and his daughter with the same feelings, but in vain. Naomi ever remembered the sad prophetic words once uttered by her Lord and Saviour, and she knew that the ruin of Jerusalem was drawing nigh. Salome too had learnt from her to believe that not one jot or tittle of what he had pronounced should ever pass away unfulfilled; and her own naturally timid and desponding disposition had made her more readily assent to the truth of his declarations of punishment and woe, than to his promises of pardon and acceptance. She could easily believe that her nation should be brought low and her beautiful city destroyed, for the wickedness of them that dwelt therein; but she could not so easily apply to herself the equally clear assurance that those who put their trust in the Lord should be safe under the shadow of his wings—that those who believed in the Son of God should be cleansed from *all sin*—pardoned, justified, saved, and glorified, without any merit of their own, or any claim on the mercy of an offended God, but a simple reliance on the atonement of his Son Jesus.

Salome's heart was weak, and when Zadok looked to see her pallid countenance lighted up with joy at the account which he gave her of her people's triumph, he was grieved to observe her turn away and weep. Gladly would she have told him all her fears and all her anxieties,

but her courage failed her, and she could only show by her dejection that she was insensible to the hopes of temporal glory and prosperity that animated her husband's breast, and unable to reveal to him the eternal hopes that, however dimly and faintly, cheered her own spirit and lightened her earthly sorrows. Zadok attributed her depression of spirits entirely to her present weak state of health, and he gently reproached Naomi for not using better endeavours to amuse her mother's mind, and at the same time regretted that he was so much occupied in the discharge of his sacred duties, and in the affairs of the city, as to have but little leisure to devote to his wife. Had he suspected the subject which formed the chief and constant theme of discourse between Salome and his daughter during his absence from home, he would still more deeply have regretted the state of public affairs that had compelled him to leave them so much alone, and expose his beloved wife to a danger which he regarded as far more to be dreaded than any temporal evils.

He had contented himself with the conviction which he entertained of Salome's pious attachment to the religion in which she had been brought up, and her implicit submission to his judgment in all spiritual matters. He also felt assured that her mind was not of that active and inquiring nature that would lead her, like Naomi, to investigate any new opinions or receive the truth of any new doctrines. He knew that she had a great veneration for the rabbi Joazer, and had always considered his opinion as a rule of faith; and when he requested him to watch over her bodily sickness, he also charged him to lose no opportunity of strengthening and establishing her spiritual health. Thus he believed that he had no cause to fear that the heresy he so much dreaded would ever be communicated to her, and he was well satisfied that the devoted affection of Naomi should watch over her, and provide for her every comfort

and attention that her present precarious state of health required. Little did this priest of the Most High God understand the power of that faith which he despised. Little did he know of those influences of the Holy Spirit which can change the whole nature of the soul, and infuse a thirst after the truth that nothing else can satisfy. Little did he know of that strength of the Lord Jesus, which is made perfect in our weakness, and which was then silently and gradually working in the soul of Salome, transforming her weakness into strength—her fears into holy confidence—and inspiring her with such an assured hope of pardon and eternal bliss as should at length shine forth resplendent amid the struggles of departing life, and make her triumphant over all that hitherto she had trembled to contemplate.

As yet this power from on high was not perfected in her soul, and she was in bondage to the fears of death and the occasional dread of God's wrath; and notwithstanding all the efforts which Naomi made again and again to chase away her fears and fill her with humble trust in the promised support of her Heavenly Father, and the atonement once offered on the cross to wipe away all her sins, she was subject to frequent temptations and doubts, that clouded her views and marred her peace.

Zadok knew nothing of all her spiritual trials, and he frequently talked to her of the joys that would be her portion, if it pleased the Lord to remove her from this world of care, and the reward that would follow her constant obedience to His laws, and her humble trust in His mercy towards His chosen people. But the ground of his hopes was not that on which Salome had learned to rest, and the humility which she had acquired at the foot of the cross made her shudder at the spirit of self-confidence that tarnished the piety even of the upright Zadok. Night and morning he prayed with her, and repeatedly he read the Scriptures to her: but the form

of his supplications, however earnest, now sounded imperfect in her ears, and his comments on the word of inspiration grieved her heart. Oh, could she but have heard him, who was dearer to her than all the world besides, pouring forth the desires of his heart in the name of Jesus of Nazareth—could she have heard him acknowledge the "Man of sorrows" to be Him of whom Moses and the prophets did speak, how joyfully could she have borne every other trial, and even, she thought, have encountered death with a smile, in the assured hope of his following her to those mansions which Christ has prepared for his disciples! And yet she could not at that time command her faltering tongue to declare in whom she believed, and entreat her husband to seek refuge in the ark provided for the day of calamity.

The evening passed away in the usual unsatisfactory manner; and the following day brought with it events that occupied Zadok's attention even more than before, and engrossed even more of his time.

Titus had returned to his camp in the Valley of Thorns, greatly exasperated at the unexpected attack which had been made on him, and determined to lose no time in commencing the siege of the offending city. During the night he was joined by one of the legions which he had left at Emmaus, and orders were immediately issued for the removal of the camp to a place called Scopus, within a mile from the outer wall, and so situated as to afford a fine view of the city, and of the level plain which extended to the base of the fortifications.

At break of day the business of removing the army and all its ponderous equipments commenced, and was performed with all that astonishing expedition and order that distinguished every movement of the well-trained Roman armies. Orders had been given the night before for the men to be in readiness; and soon

after the sun rose, all the tents were taken down and packed in the waggons, with the rest of the heavy baggage. Then the first signal-trumpet blew, and at its sound the troops all fell into their ranks, each carrying their arms, their kitchen furniture, and their instruments for constructing fortifications. The second trumpet sounded, and instantly fire was set to temporary bulwarks and towers that had surrounded the encampment, and quickly they formed a blazing mass of ruin. The third and last signal sounded loud and long, and then the herald, who stood by the side of Titus, raised his voice, and demanded whether the troops were prepared for battle; and he was answered by a cheerful and universal shout of assent. Three times he repeated the same demand, and each time the deafening shout of the armed multitude replied to him, while the hands of the troops were raised on high to express their readiness and zeal.

The word of command was given, and that glorious array of invincible men marched simultaneously forward. Alas! that such a goodly assembly should be moving in all their pride and pomp towards the slaughter of millions of their fellow-creatures, and the destruction of the noblest and most sacred city that ever adorned the earth! The army advanced in the usual order of march: the allies led the way attended by the company of pioneers, and then the baggage of the officers, escorted by a strong guard. Titus himself followed with a select guard of spearmen and the cavalry belonging to the legions. The military engines, strongly guarded, formed the next detachment; and to these succeeded the sacred standards, attended by the trumpeters; then the legionaries in their phalanx, ten deep; the slaves with the baggage; and, last of all, the mercenary troops, with a strong rear-guard to keep order.

The equipment of this fine army was as admirable as the order and discipline that marked its movement.

Nothing vain or superfluous was to be seen in the dress or ornaments of either the men or their officers; while at the same time it was evident that the Romans knew the value of a certain degree of show, and endeavoured to produce an imposing effect upon their adversaries. The accoutrements of the officers were superb and costly: their helmets, cuirasses, and swords were inlaid with silver and gold, and their beautiful and spirited steeds were richly caparisoned; while the common soldiers prided themselves on their well-polished shields and helmets. The numerous gilded banners which attended the army, in addition to the glittering eagles, increased the brilliance of the scene; and the whole of that numerous army looked rather as if they were attired and equipped for a public feast, than as if carnage and desolation were their only objects.

The Romans formed a second encampment near Scopus, two legions being in front, and a third at some distance in the rear; and while they were erecting their walls and towers of defence, the tenth legion, which had taken its route by Jericho, also arrived, and received immediate orders to pitch their tents at the foot of the Mount of Olives, facing the lofty temple walls and pinnacles.

Each of the leaders of the rival factions in the city beheld the hostile camps forming under their walls. Eleazar looked from the summit of the temple, John from the porticoes of the outer courts, and Simon from the heights of Zion; and for the first time they all became aware that their only chance of safety lay in a united effort to repel their formidable enemies. They entered into negociations of peace; and at length agreed to lay aside their mutual animosities, and combine their now divided forces for a simultaneous attack on the common foe. Zadok and Javan hailed this tardy reconciliation as a second omen that the Lord was on their side, and that he had inclined these fierce and hitherto implacable

enemies to forget their personal hatred, and only contend with a valiant emulation who should be foremost in rushing on their assailants. Joyfully did the son of Zadok obey the call to arms, and hasten to join his leader. He was at his father's house when the summons reached him. He had returned to his home in search of a part of his armour for the expected sally; and Salome heard with trembling fear the call for her son to join his comrades. She gave him a mother's parting blessing; and when he was gone from her sight, she passed the anxious hours that succeeded in fervent prayers for his safety. How earnestly did she beseech her Heavenly Father to spare his life, and not suffer him to be hurried into eternity while his soul was a prey to evil passions and baneful prejudices! Naomi united in her mother's supplications; and while they were thus engaged, a fierce and bloody scene was going forward in the Valley of Jehosaphat.

The combined forces of Jerusalem had sallied out by the eastern gates, and rushing along the margin of the Kedron, had fallen with unexpected and irresistible fury upon the tenth legion, then busily occupied in constructing their camp. The soldiers were at work in their intrenchments, and many of them were unarmed. They retreated before the sudden attack of the Jews, and several of them were killed before they could regain their arms. Fresh swarms of their assailants still poured from the city, and in their consternation the Romans yet further multiplied their numbers. Accustomed as they were to fight in battle-array, they knew not how to resist the wild desultory attacks of the Jews, who rushed upon them with a blind impetuosity. Sometimes they turned and faced their pursuers, and succeeded in repulsing them for a moment and slaying the foremost; but such overpowering numbers followed to take their places, that the brave legionaries were on the verge of a total defeat, when Titus, who had heard of

their danger, came suddenly to their relief. He was attended by a few picked men, and fell so unexpectedly on the Jews that he drove them up the valley with considerable loss.

The tenth legion now rallied, and united with the troops that followed Titus in pursuing the enemy along the valley; but notwithstanding the disadvantage to which the Jews were exposed, from the steepness and inequality of the ground, they yet had the courage to turn and face their pursuers after they had crossed the brook. In this situation they maintained the battle till noon, when Titus placed a part of his forces at the end of the valley, and sent the rest to occupy a strong position on the heights above, in order to secure the valley. This movement was mistaken by the Jews for a retreat; and a sentinel who had been posted on the walls, made a signal to those within the city that the Romans had fled. Instantly a fresh multitude issued from the gates with the undisciplined fury of wild beasts, and bore down the ranks of their enemies by the impetuosity of their charge. They fled to the mountains, and once more Titus and his chosen band of attendants were left exposed to the attack of the infuriated multitude. He was posted on the declivity of the hill, when he found himself deserted by the main body of his forces; but taking advantage of his commanding situation, he defended himself resolutely, while Marcellus and his comrades endeavoured to ward off the blows that were aimed at him on every side.

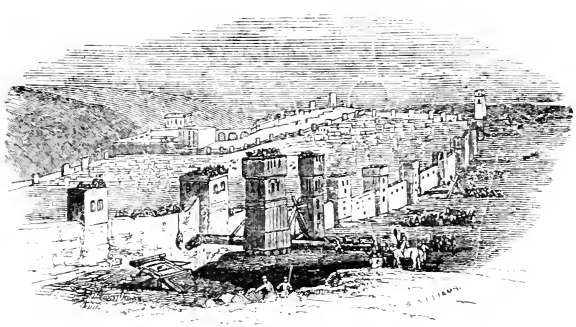
One of the Jews, who had distinguished himself throughout the engagement by his intrepid courage, advanced through the crowd of his countrymen to the spot where Titus and his brave company stood like lions holding the inferior animals at bay. With a desperate effort he broke through the Roman band, and aimed a deadly blow at their general. So wild and sudden was his attack, that he would probably have succeeded, at

least in wounding Titus, whose attention was directed another way, but for the courage and activity of Marcellus. He saw the descending blow, and quick as thought he sprang between his commander and the fierce Jew, and arrested the weapon ere it reached the destined object. The flashing eyes of the Jewish soldier fell upon him who had thus robbed him of the triumph so nearly won, and Marcellus saw that he was again brought hand to hand in conflict with the brother of Naomi. Revenge was a passion that lurked deep in Javan's heart, and now it rose up to animate him against the young Roman. He forgot his eagerness to rush upon the general, in the hope that now he had found an opportunity of obtaining vengeance for all the injuries that his prejudiced mind laid to the charge of Marcellus.

With a bitter curse on his lips, he turned to aim his sword at the heart of the Christian soldier, and was astonished at the strength and dexterity with which his attack was met by his opponent. Marcellus would not for worlds have slain the brother of his beloved Naomi, and he contented himself with warding off the fierce blows of Javan. Had this single combat been permitted to continue for any length of time, Marcellus must have been driven either to seek the life of his antagonist, or to save his own by a retreat, for Javan was resolved to die or to conquer. But happily they were forced asunder by the rush of combatants on either side, and they met no more in that day's battle.

Those of Titus's troops who had gained the summit of the hill, and saw the enemy come pouring up on either side, and attacking their noble general and his faithful band with determined fury, were struck with horror at the critical situation to which they had abandoned him. By a loud outcry they raised an alarm among the whole legion, and spread the information that Titus was surrounded and in danger of being massacred. Bitterly

they reproached one another for their desertion of their brave commander; and with the resolute courage of men ashamed of their conduct, and resolved to make amends for it, they rallied their scattered numbers, faced their pursuers, and by their determined valour at length succeeded in driving them down the hill. Every foot of ground was well contested by the Jews, but they could not long stand against the force of the Romans bearing down upon them from above in a solid phalanx, and they were compelled to retreat, entirely discomfited. Titus remained to establish a strong and efficient line of outposts, and then retired to his camp, and dismissed his wearied men to seek repose after the lengthened struggle which they had been compelled that day to maintain.



CHAPTER XXII.

It was now the time of the passover; and though the festive joy that was wont to pervade the once happy and favoured city at that sacred season was gone for ever, yet even in these days of calamity the hallowed festival still retained its hold on the hearts of the people of Judah. Formerly the whole population of the land used to repair with joyful feet to their holy and beloved city, where they found every house open to receive visitors with a free and cheerful hospitality. This thronging of the sons of Israel to offer up their united praises for the deliverance of their forefathers from the bondage of Egypt could now no longer be effected; yet great numbers still repaired at the accustomed period to the metropolis, undeterred by fears or obstacles from attempting to accomplish what they regarded as a solemn duty and privilege. They found an entrance into the city, but to retire from it was impossible, and this vast addition to the population of the place only increased the misery of the besieged, by hastening the consumption of the provisions that were yet stored up for the day of want.

The recurrence of this holy feast at such a time of civil disorder was also the occasion of other calamities, by causing the rupture of the recently established peace between the factious leaders of the city. The great day of sacrifice arrived. The priests were at their stations, and all was ready for the celebration of the sacred rite. Eleazar commanded the gates of the inner temple, where

he still kept his quarters, to be opened for the admission of the worshippers; when a party of John's most desperate adherents stole in unperceived among the crowd with swords and other weapons concealed beneath their cloaks. No sooner were these ruffians within the gates than they cast aside their cloaks, and brandishing their swords, fell upon the defenceless multitude, who expected that a general massacre would follow. The Zealots suspected that the stratagem was designed entirely for their destruction, and leaving the gates undefended, they all fled away and took refuge in the subterranean chambers beneath the temple. The helpless crowd who had assembled to worship the Lord God of Israel now gathered around the sacred altars for protection; but even the sanctity of those hallowed spots was insufficient to preserve the fugitives from the violence of the Zealots. Many were trampled to death, and a still greater number slain either in mere wantonness and cruelty, or to gratify private hatred. The altars flowed with blood, but it was not the blood of the appointed victims shed for the expiation of the sins of the people. It was the blood of human beings, poured forth by the hands of murder and sacrilege, to fill up the measure of Zion's iniquity, and call down the vengeance of an insulted God!

At length the fierce partisans of John of Gischala were glutted with robbery and carnage; and having taken possession of the inner apartments of the temple, they made terms of peace with their enemies who were concealed beneath. They permitted them to come up from their places of refuge, and even to resume their arms, and remain under the nominal command of their leader Eleazar; but in fact they became a subordinate part of the faction attached to John, and thus the sedition which before was divided into three parties was reduced to two.

Meanwhile Titus was slowly and cautiously advancing

towards the city. He posted in the camp at Scopus a sufficient body of horse and foot to guard against the incursions of the enemy, and then he employed the rest of the army in levelling the whole space between the place of encampment and the Tomb of Herod, near the pool called the Fishpond of Serpents. All the fences and verdant hedges that enclosed the orchards and gardens were torn up; and those beautifully luxuriant spots where the inhabitants of Jerusalem had enjoyed so many hours of recreation, were swept away by the merciless hand of war. The trees were cut down, and the clear fountains filled up with rubbish, that a broad and level road might be constructed from Scopus to within a short distance of the outer wall of the city.

Simon was not idle during this interval; and as he was unable to meet the advancing foe in a pitched battle, he had recourse to stratagems, by which he hoped to obtain some advantage, however small. He placed the enterprise under the conduct of Javan, as the most daring and faithful of his officers; and the zealous young Jew readily accepted the command. To the astonishment of the Romans they one day beheld a considerable body of the Jews issue rapidly from a gate near the Women's Tower, as if forcibly driven out by a stronger party within. They supposed that this band consisted of the fiercer insurgents, and that they were expelled by the party who desired peace. This idea was confirmed by a number of Jews appearing on the wall, holding out their hands, and making every sign that they would willingly receive the Romans, and open their gates to them. At the same time they cast down stones upon those whom they had driven out, and who were cowering beneath the wall as if dreading the approach of the enemy, and supplicating mercy from their countrymen.

The Roman soldiers who beheld this transaction were about to charge in a body, but they were restrained

by Titus, who suspected some artifice, and commanded them to remain at their posts. A small detachment, however, who were in front of the rest, employed under the inspection of their centurion Rufus, seized their arms and rushed towards the wall. Rufus, himself, in the ardour of the moment, forgot the attention to discipline for which he was usually remarkable. He recognised the hated and perfidious Javan among those who now seemed exposed to destruction; and with a strong desire of vengeance for all his cruelty and want of faith, he sprang forward with his unsuspecting men. The Jews, who had advanced to meet them at some distance from the wall, now fled to the gates, and were followed by the inconsiderate Romans, until they found themselves within the flanking towers. The artful Javan and his companions then turned upon them, while others sallied forth and surrounded the little band, and those on the walls hurled down stones and other missiles on their heads. They suffered a considerable loss in killed and wounded; but some of them escaped, with Rufus, fighting a valiant retreat, and pursued by the enemy as far as the monument of Helena. The Jews then retired, exulting in their victory, and when they reached their walls they insulted the vanquished Romans by clashing their shields and loading them with every ludicrous and opprobrious name, for their folly in being so easily deceived.

The proud spirit of Rufus was roused to the uttermost at these taunts, and he fiercely cast them back at Javan, with threats of future vengeance. For the present, however, that vengeance was beyond his reach, and he was forced to lead back the remnant of his men to the camp, greatly discomfited at their defeat and loss. Nor was this all, for they were received with severe reproofs by their tribune for their breach of discipline; and so great was the displeasure of Titus that he threatened to execute upon the offenders the martial law,

which punished even such breach of orders with death This announcement caused great sorrow throughout the army, for Rufus and his brave men were deservedly loved and respected by their comrades; and all the officers immediately gathered round the general to implore his mercy. For some time he sternly refused to listen to their entreaties, and it is probable that he might have carried his harsh sentence into effect, as a warning to the rest of the army, had it not been for the earnest intercessions of Marcellus. The grief of his young friend and favourite, and the high opinion which he had always entertained of Rufus, at length appeased his anger; and he pardoned the offence of the centurion and his band upon their pledging themselves to atone for the error by a strict attention to regularity and discipline for the future.

This act of lenity increased the popularity of the general, and the devotion of the army to his service. With fresh vigour they proceeded to carry his schemes into execution, and in four days the whole space from Scopus to the wall was levelled, for the conveyance of the baggage and removal of the camp. The army took up their position among the northern and western walls; the infantry in front, the cavalry in the rear, and the archers between them. With this impenetrable line between the city and the camp, they removed in perfect safety all the heavy baggage, and Titus encamped within a quarter of a mile from the outer wall, near the Tower of Psephina. Another detachment of the army was posted near the Tower of Hippicus, at some distance from head-quarters, and the tenth legion kept its position near the Mount of Olives.

At this period Jerusalem was divided into different quarters, which might almost be termed distinct cities, each inclosed in its own walls, and all surrounded by the great outer wall, which was guarded with towers of solid masonry, of the same kind as that which composed

the rest of the fortifications. The first or outer wall encompassed the northern quarter called Bezetha. It was built of stones thirty-five feet long, and so massive as to offer an almost impenetrable obstacle even to the powerful battering-rams and other formidable engines of the Romans. It was erected by King Agrippa the First, and though it fell far short of his original design, it was yet a work of great power and strength, being upwards of seventeen feet in height, and the same in thickness. The Jews had carried it up to the height of thirty-five feet, but not with the same stability as that part which was built by Agrippa, and the summit was furnished with battlements and pinnacles, which gave it a still greater elevation.

The second wall enclosed a part of the lower city, and joined the north-west corner of the strong citadel of Antonia. This fortress was built on a high rock, and was separated from Bezetha by a deep ditch. It stood at the north-west of the temple, and with that beautiful and commanding edifice composed a separate and independent portion of the city.

The most ancient part of the walls was that which surrounded Sion, the southern quarter of the town, and containing the strong pile of buildings called the City of David. It passed along the verge of the Valley of Hinnom, and then turning northwards, joined the eastern portico of the temple.

Thus the city was calculated to resist the strength and perseverance of almost any army that could be brought against it, being composed of four distinct quarters, each, it would seem, able to stand a regular siege independent of the fate of the other portions.

The towers which guarded the whole of this circuit were thirty-five feet high, and of the same width. On their summits were lofty chambers, less solidly built, which were again surmounted with large tanks to receive the rain-water. There were in all a hundred and sixty-

four of these massy towers, the ascent to which was by handsome flights of steps; and the space from tower to tower being about three hundred and fifty feet, the whole extent of the walls must have been rather more than four miles.

Titus ascended the most elevated height in the neighbourhood of the camp, attended by Marcellus and some other of his officers, with a strong escort of cavalry. He wished to obtain a commanding view of the celebrated city which he was destined to overthrow, so that not one stone should remain upon another. Had he known what was to be the fate of that splendid city, he would have regarded it with other and more melancholy feelings. The intimate knowledge which Marcellus possessed of the interior enabled him to point out to his admiring general the situation of all its various quarters, and the most distinguished buildings.

The fortress of Antonia, and the snowy walls of the temple adorned with burnished gold, attracted the immediate attention of Titus, and long he gazed on the wonderful pile, where art and wealth had expended all their treasures. The citadel rose conspicuous above the temple, on a steep rock ninety feet high. The body of the tower was seventy feet in height, and it was finished at each corner by lofty towers. It was provided within with every accommodation that luxury could require, and was fitted rather for a royal palace than a garrison for troops. The temple itself appeared a fitting edifice to contain all the countless treasures that had once been lavished on its altars and its walls by the piety of the sons of Zion, and which, in spite of the frequent depredations that had been committed by foreign and domestic foes, were still of surpassing value.

Titus surveyed all this magnificence, and the many other noble and extensive buildings that lay before his view; and then he proceeded, with some caution, to

make an entire circuit of the city. Nicanor, the tribune who had so greatly distinguished himself at Jotapata, was one of those who followed the general, and by his side rode the liberated captive Josephus. The Jew expressed an ardent wish to approach the walls and address his countrymen, who were watching their movements from the battlements and towers; and Nicanor imprudently consented to accompany him, in the hope that their united persuasions might have the effect of inclining the besieged to listen to terms of peace. Josephus made an eloquent appeal to them, describing the power and valour of the Romans, and vaunting also the clemency and generosity of Titus towards those who submitted to his arms. But while he was yet speaking, and extending his arms towards his countrymen, as if to implore them to have pity on themselves, one of those on the wall aimed an arrow at his breast, at the same time assailing him with the epithets of coward and traitor. The shaft did not reach its intended mark, but it pierced the arm of Nicanor, who stood close to Josephus, and inflicted a severe wound.

Titus was highly exasperated at this act of wanton cruelty and insult, which plainly showed that all attempts at bringing about terms of capitulation would be in vain, and he instantly resolved on commencing the siege without any further delay. He gave orders to his soldiers to ravage and destroy the suburbs, and to bring away everything that would be serviceable in raising their mounds and completing their works. All the trees were quickly cut down, and the suburbs, lately so blooming and beautiful, became naked and desolate. Titus resolved to make his first attack on the outer wall which surrounded Bezetha, because the buildings of that quarter did not reach to the wall, which consequently appeared lower. The spot which he selected was near the tomb of John the high-priest, and immediate preparations were set on foot.

When the inhabitants of Jerusalem beheld the Roman works being completed, and saw that the day of assault was near at hand, those who had hitherto been entirely occupied in destroying their own fellow-citizens, began at length to turn their attention in the direction of the Romans—the foes alike of every faction—and the more peaceable inmates enjoyed a temporary repose from their outrage and violence. Many of them even hoped and prayed for the success of the Roman arms, as the only means by which they could be rescued from the power of enemies far more to be dreaded.

The force under the command of Simon consisted of 10,000 of his own men, and 5,000 Idumeans; John of Gischala had 6,000; and 2,400 owned Eleazar as their leader. The son of Gioras allowed himself and his followers no respite to their labours. With vast exertion they succeeded in raising the military engines, formerly taken from Cestius, on the walls; but his men wanted skill to use them with much effect, and the Romans continued their labours under the shelter of their pent-houses of wickerwork. Being also more practised in the use of the destructive catapultas and balistas, they greatly annoyed the besieged, and not only repelled their frequent sallies, but cast over the walls stones of an enormous size from the distance of two furlongs. These masses of rock carried death and ruin in their track, and the Jews knew not how to guard against them; but as they were generally of a very white colour they were enabled to see them approaching, and numbers of men were placed on the wall to watch for these silent and deadly enemies. These sentinels gave notice to their comrades the moment they perceived the stone leave the engine, by crying, "The bolt is coming!" when they immediately separated, and threw themselves flat on the ground, so that the rock generally passed harmless over them. This stratagem was observed by the Romans, and they afterwards took the precaution of

blackening the stones, which completely baffled the besieged, and rendered these tremendous implements fearfully destructive.

Notwithstanding the great terror and loss occasioned by these engines, the Jews did not suffer their enemies to proceed undisturbed with the mounds which they were erecting, but were incessant in their sallies, and in the artifices which they employed to interrupt their labours. All their efforts were, however, unsuccessful, and the works were speedily completed. Then the engines were brought to a proper distance from the walls, and strongly guarded against the excursions of the besieged. The signal was given, and at the same moment a thundering noise resounded through every part of the city. On three different parts of the walls the battering-rams were let loose together, and terror ran through the heart of almost every dweller in Jerusalem. The soldiers of the besieged city raised a general and terrific shout, in reply to the first strokes of the ram; and all private animosities, all party feuds, appeared to be forgotten in the dreadful excitement that ensued. Convinced that nothing remained but to unite all parties in the common cause, Simon proclaimed an amnesty to all of John's adherents who would join his men in defence of the wall; and though John was himself too suspicious of his rival leader to venture out of his strong-hold, yet he did not oppose his followers obeying the summons. The two factions combined in their efforts to set the engines on fire by discharging combustibles from above, while strong parties sallied from the gates below, tore away the palisades and killed many of the engineers.

Titus was unwearied in his exertions. Wherever assistance and counsel were wanted, there was he to be seen in person, and his courage and presence of mind equalled his activity. His personal inspection and encouragement excited his troops to fresh exertions, and at

length a tower which stood at an angle of the wall came down beneath the blows of the battering-ram; but its fall made no breach in the walls. The besieged drew back as if in terror at this event, and the Romans were unsuspicious of any immediate attack, when suddenly a large body of the enemy rushed out from a gate near the Tower of Hippicus, and fell upon them with resistless fury and impetuosity. They were furnished with flaming brands, for the purpose of setting fire to the engines, and they soon reached the intrenchments. Had they not been most valiantly opposed by a party of Alexandrians, they must have succeeded in destroying all those dreaded machines; but while they struggled fiercely with their opponents round the engines Titus came galloping up, attended by his cavalry. With his own hand he laid twelve of the Jews dead on the ground, and the rest at length retreated, leaving one of their number a prisoner in the hands of the Romans. This unhappy man was immediately made fearful example of, being crucified before the walls, in the hope of deterring his countrymen from making any more such desperate sallies. He was the first—would that he had proved the last!—of these rebellious people who was treated with such cruel and unjustifiable barbarity, and made to endure those torments which their fathers had inflicted on the innocent, the holy, the divine Jesus of Nazareth. But the fate of this victim to Roman severity did not in the least degree deter his fellow-citizens from exposing themselves to the same perils, whenever they could hope to gain the most trifling advantage over the enemy. They continued the conflict until night put an end to their efforts, and the Romans retired to their camp exhausted with the severe exertions of the day.

With the morning dawn the battle was renewed, and again the terrific sound of the battering-rams came like thunder on the ears of the besieged. One of those dreadful engines had been named by the Jews "Nico,"

or "The Victorious," for they observed that nothing seemed able to resist the overwhelming strength of its blows. The dreaded Nico continued to work with unabated vigour throughout the day, and at night it ceased not to thunder against the wall, until at length it began to totter. When the Jews saw that a breach was to be apprehended, they forsook the wall, and abandoned all further attempts at defending it. The showers of darts and arrows which their enemies were able to pour down upon them from the lofty towers which they had erected to overlook the battlements, had for some time forced them to descend from the summit of the wall, and leave the battering-rams to continue their destructive blows without any effort to interrupt them. They were also wearied with exertion, and anxious to return to their own houses within the second wall, and therefore they deserted the suburb, and left Bezetha an easy prey to the conqueror.

Those of the inhabitants who still remained in that quarter fled to the more secure parts of the city, and the gateways were thronged with terrified fugitives, carrying all that was portable of their possessions, and hurrying from the expected incursion of the Romans. The confusion and alarm that already prevailed in the city were augmented by this sudden influx of a destitute population, who were entirely dependent on the charity and hospitality of their fellow-citizens for shelter and subsistence. These social virtues had almost expired in that miserable city, while selfishness and avarice reigned triumphant on every side. Few were found willing to receive and comfort their distressed brethren, and the sufferings of these wretched people were extreme. But some individuals were yet remaining in Jerusalem in whose hearts all the better and nobler feelings were not extinguished, and who gladly offered an asylum to as many of the fugitives as their dwellings would contain. Among these Zadok was the most distinguished, and

his benevolence set a bright example to the rich and noble of the city. Several families were brought under the shelter of his roof, and received from the hands of Naomi and Deborah all the assistance and relief that their destitute condition required.

Salome was at this time but little able to support the constant excitement of terror in which she lived from day to day; and the appalling sounds that reached her ears told her sinking heart that the destined ruin was approaching very nigh. Naomi had hitherto used every precaution to conceal from her mother the progress that the enemy was daily making, and the slaughter that was effected among their countrymen. It would but have augmented her terror and her grief, and added to the constant anxiety which she felt from the perils to which both Zadok and Javan were exposed. But when Bezetha was abandoned to the conqueror, and the inhabitants rushed tumultuously into the inner city, mingled with the troops, and uttering wild cries of terror, the truth could no longer be disguised, and Salome learnt that the Roman eagles were even then being planted on one of the walls of Jerusalem. Soon the whole of the deserted quarter was in the possession of the enemy, and Titus having ordered a large portion of the outer wall to be thrown down, took up his position near what was called the Camp of the Assyrians. His troops commenced an immediate attack on the second wall, and were resisted with dauntless courage by the Jews. John and his party maintained the conflict from the citadel of Antonia and the northern porticoes of the temple, while Simon's men defended the wall as far as the aqueduct that passed to the Tower of Hippicus. Many and fierce were the sallies of the besieged, but as often as they rushed on the well-disciplined foe, they were driven back with considerable loss. That night both parties remained under arms, as the Romans every

moment expected a sudden attack, and the Jews feared to leave their walls defenceless.

As soon as daylight returned the engagement was renewed, and never was a contest maintained with greater vigour and courage than were displayed on either side. The Jews strove to emulate one another in their contempt of danger, and in the fearless exposure of their lives, for they fought beneath the eye of Simon; and such were the awe and reverence with which he had inspired his followers, that they were willing to brave every peril in the hope of obtaining his approbation. Titus exercised the same influence over his troops, and the pride of their first success, joined to his continual presence, excited them to a stubborn and unconquerable courage.

The central tower of the second wall was the point against which the chief efforts of the Romans were directed, and the dreaded Nico was brought to bear upon it with all its resistless force. This tower had been committed by Simon to the care and defence of Javan; and a strong garrison was placed under his command for the protection of so important a post. The Romans soon drove away almost all these men by the cloud of arrows which they sent among them from their own movable buildings which they had brought to look down upon them, and Javan remained with only ten companions. He scorned to fly, and determined to have recourse to a stratagem by which an advantage might be gained to his party. He therefore desired his men to remain quiet for some time, and conceal themselves as much as possible from the enemy. But when the tower began to totter above their heads, he directed them to start up and stretch forth their hands, as if imploring mercy. At the same time he advanced to the battlements of the tower in a supplicating attitude, and called loudly on the name of Titus. His voice

reached the ears of the general, who immediately gave orders for the assault to be suspended, and commanded Javan to speak. The artful Jew replied that it was his sincere desire to surrender, and throw himself upon the generosity of the noble Titus, and that he had endeavoured to bring all those under his command to the same determination. As he made this deceitful speech five of his men appeared to take his part, while the rest declared that they would never be slaves to the Romans, as long as death was in their power. A fierce quarrel seemed to follow these declarations, and the assault was in the meantime entirely suspended. Javan observed this, and instantly sent one of his men secretly to inform Simon of his artifice, and advise him to take advantage of the temporary cessation of the siege, and to concert measures for some vigorous sally, while he endeavoured as long as possible to attract the attention of the enemy.

He then continued his pretended expostulation with the adverse party of his own men, who stood on the breastworks, brandishing their swords with a menacing air, and at length, as if resolved to die rather than yield, struck their own breasts with violence, and fell, seemingly dead. The Romans were completely deceived by this pretended act of devotion to liberty, and even pitied the fate of the self-destroyed victims; but one of them, less generous than the rest, discharged an arrow at Javan, and wounded him in the face. He withdrew the shaft and held it reproachfully towards Titus, who sternly rebuked the man who had shot it, and desired Josephus to advance towards the tower and speak with the Jew. He, however, knew his own countrymen too well to place himself within their reach, and declined the errand, but a deserter named Æneas offered to go in his stead. Javan called to him to come close to the wall, that he might throw down to him some money as a pledge of his good faith; and when Æneas spread out the folds of

his cloak to receive it, he cast at him a large stone with the intention of crushing him on the spot. He missed his aim, but wounded a soldier who stood near him, and Titus then saw that the whole affair was a treacherous device to gain time. He was enraged at the deceit which had been practised upon him, and gave instant orders for the assault to be resumed with fresh vigour Javan perceived that no further advantage was to be obtained, and in desperation he and his men set fire to the tower in several places. It blazed rapidly up around them, and when the flames were high and fierce they leaped boldly into the midst of them, and again deceived the Romans into a belief that they had bravely sacrificed their lives. It was but another artifice, for they had thrown themselves into a secret passage that led underground to the interior of the city, where they soon appeared, and boasted of their success in keeping the enemy so long inactive.

On the fifth day from that on which Titus became master of the first wall, the second also was taken, and the Jews retreated. The Roman general entered that quarter of the lower city with a thousand men-at-arms and a few other chosen troops, and found himself in the midst of those streets occupied by the clothiers, the woolmerchants, and the coppersmiths, with many narrow lanes, leading to the walls in every direction. In the hope of gaining over the people to his side, and convincing them that their wisest course would be to submit without any farther struggle, Titus gave strict orders that no houses should be set on fire or injured, and no massacre committed. He caused it to be proclaimed that he did not wage war against the defenceless population, but against the insurgent garrison; and that to all the peaceable inhabitants he would readily restore their property. The leaders of the Jews and their seditious troops regarded this lenity as a proof of weakness, and threatened instant death to all who should attempt

to utter a word of surrendering. They stabbed without mercy every one whom they suspected of wishing for peace. and then fell furiously on the enemy as they passed along the streets. Some poured their darts and arrows upon them from the houses, and others rushed upon them by the intricate and narrow lanes with which they were well acquainted, but which embarrassed the Romans greatly. Others sallied out of the walls that were already lost, by gates which were not yet guarded by the conquering army, and attacked their enemy in the rear. Advance or retreat seemed alike difficult for the Romans, and but for the presence of Titus, who came in person to their relief with a band of archers, a dreadful loss would probably have been sustained. He, however, succeeded in driving back the countless assailants on every side, and brought off the greatest part of his men; but the conquest which had been won with so much labour and bloodshed was again lost, and the Jews regained possession of the second wall.

This success inspired the insurgent troops with the greatest joy and confidence, and they doubted not that if ever the Romans again gained an entrance into the city they should be able to repulse them as they had already done; but they did not consider the progress of that more certain enemy that already was working its silent way through the city, and daily adding to the victims of misery and violence. The cruel and desperate soldiery had hitherto lived in plenty on what they plundered from the people, and they heeded not the distress which they inflicted, and beneath which many were continually sinking and expiring. Indeed they rather rejoiced in thus ridding the city of some part of its disaffected populace, and continued to seize on all the provisions that came in their way and retain them for their own use. They were unable to repair the breach which the Romans had made in the wall, but with determined resolution they presented themselves to fill it with their own bodies,

and for three days they fought without intermission. Vast numbers fell on the spot, but their comrades stept undauntedly upon their bleeding carcasses to supply their place and share their fate. On the fourth day they gave way, and were compelled to abandon the post; when Titus again took possession of the wall, and caused a large part of it to be razed to the ground, while he strongly garrisoned the remaining portion.

Still Antonia and the temple looked proudly down upon the conquering arms of Rome, and all the high places of Sion and David's city remained in their strength; and the garrisons were undismayed at the loss they had sustained. Titus resolved to allow the besieged a little time for reflection, in the hope that the peaceable party might yet prevail before it should be too late, and persuade the rebels to surrender. In order to impress the besieged still more with the strength and discipline of his army, he employed the interval which he allowed them from their exertions in taking a grand review of all his troops within sight of the city. From every window and every tower that commanded a view of the splendid pageant the Jewish people and their tyrant defenders looked down with consternation and dismay, while the whole Roman army, in their best equipments, defiled beyond the wall. It was a brilliant spectacle, for all the arms were uncased, and the polished shields and breastplates exposed uncovered to glitter in the sunbeams; while the cavalry followed, leading their beautiful and richly-caparisoned horses, whose trappings gleamed with gold and silver. All ranks, all classes of persons, were assembled to look on their destined destroyers; and truly it was a sight that might strike terror into the boldest hearts, or induce any beleaguered people to lay down their arms, except the obstinate and insurgent Jews, who felt that they had too deeply offended to hope for any terms from the Romans.

This beautiful but appalling spectacle was presented

to the eyes of the besieged for four days; but no offers of capitulation were made—no overtures of peace reached the Roman general; and with reluctance he gave orders for the siege to be recommenced. The first step was to raise lofty mounds against the Antonia, and also against that part of the wall which was defended by Simon. The Jews had by this time learned to use their military engines with great dexterity, and they now plied them with deadly effect against the Romans employed in constructing the works. Titus was willing once more to give them an offer of peace, and for this purpose he sent Josephus again to address them; and having found a spot where he could be heard without being exposed to the arrows and darts of his countrymen, he made to them a long and eloquent speech. He used every argument that religion or humanity could furnish. Many of the people were touched by his earnest expostulations; but the Zealots were only the more irritated and enraged; and their fury knew no bounds when they discovered that numbers of the miserable populace were deserting to the enemy. Many sold all that they possessed in the city, and then fled; others swallowed their money and jewels, and then escaped to the Roman camp, where they were kindly received, and suffered to pass unmolested to whatever place they chose. Their success emboldened others, and all the efforts of John and Simon were ineffectual to restrain the constant desertions that now took place. Their partizans watched every avenue and outlet with the greatest care and diligence, and cruelly slaughtered all whom they suspected of an intention to desert. This charge also served as a convenient pretext on which they could seize and massacre any one whose wealth they coveted, and numbers were put to death who were innocent of any such design as that of which the murderers accused them.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The son of Ananus no longer passed up and down the streets of Jerusalem uttering his warning and prophetic cry. He was neither seen nor heard from the day that the siege began. The woes which he had so long and so perseveringly denounced were come in all their dread reality. Famine, with its attendant miseries, was felt throughout the city, and with the general distress the desperation of the insurgents increased also. There was no longer any corn to be seen in the markets for sale, and if the ruffian soldiers heard of any being concealed in private houses, they furiously broke them open and dragged away the treasure. If they were disappointed in the search, they tortured the wretched inhabitants to make them disclose and deliver up what they frequently did not possess. Humanity shudders at the horrid recital of the barbarity exercised by these monsters, and the sufferings of their miserable victims; which were aggravated by seeing their tyrants revelling in plenty, and even in intemperance while they were expiring for want. Every natural affection, every generous sentiment, was destroyed by the all-absorbing hunger that raged among all classes. The dearest and the closest ties were severed, and those who would in happier times have laid down their lives to preserve those of their husbands, their wives, their children, and other beloved relatives, now were seen to snatch from their dying grasp the last morsel of food, and greedily devour it before their eyes. Oh these were

days of sorrow such as never had been, and may God grant they never may be again! The grey hairs of old age, and the helpless innocence of childhood excited no compassion—all were alike sacrificed to the cruel selfishness that reigned triumphant in that abode of crime and horror.

And were there no exceptions to this awful state of sin and pollution? Had the Lord God of Holiness and mercy no sanctuary left in that once blessed city? Blessed be His name, amidst so many who profaned His dwelling-place, there were yet a few in whom His image dwelt, and who thought upon his commandments to do them. In the house of Zadok, piety, charity, faith, and resignation glowed with an inextinguishable flame, and its inmates were as a burning and a shining light in the midst of a thick darkness. The influence of Javan over the partizans of Simon was sufficient to preserve his family from the visits of the plunderers, or if a few of the ruffians attempted to enter the gates, they found them too well secured and guarded; and hitherto the effects of the famine had not been felt so powerfully in that habitation as in almost every other. Zadok had foreseen what must be the unavoidable consequence of the waste and destruction of provisions that had been committed by the members of every faction before the commencement of the siege, and he had taken the precaution to lay up large stores of corn and other articles of food against the day of necessity. These stores were unknown to the insurgents, or doubtless even the protection of Simon himself would have failed to save the dwelling from their attacks, or the inhabitants from outrage and slaughter. The provisions thus preserved were not kept for the use of Zadok's family, but were freely bestowed on those who had taken refuge in his house, and on many others who knew his benevolence and came secretly to share it. He himself, and all belonging to his establishment, allowed themselves

no more sustenance than was barely sufficient to support life, that they might have more to give to those who needed; and their wasted forms and pallid cheeks would have prevented any suspicion that they yet possessed the means of living in plenty.

The days, the weary days, passed on; and the provisions in Zadok's secret storehouse rapidly diminished. With great reluctance he was compelled to restrain his liberal spirit, and refuse all further aid to those who were not of his own household. The strangers who had so long found an asylum beneath his roof, went forth to seek a subsistence elsewhere, but they only found death in some of its most dreadful forms. Naomi wept in secret over the sufferings which she could no longer relieve; but when she sat by the side of her mother, or glided about, a shadow of her former self, to minister to her wants, she forced an appearance of cheerfulness which was far from her compassionate heart. It was with gratitude and joy she watched that beloved mother, and saw her daily fading away; for though "the outward man decayed, the inward man was renewed day by day;" and she knew that death would be a kind and welcome visitor, to take her from a scene of surpassing woe, to the presence of her Saviour and her God. Zadok too was resigned to part with the object of his love, rather than see her linger in protracted sorrow and anxiety; but grief would frequently unman his soul, and tears would start to his gazing eye, while he looked on the sinking form of her whom he loved with a devoted affection, and who had been the light and the joy of his life.

Many hours in every day he passed from home, in fruitless efforts to lessen the misery that surrounded him, and to pour the balm of religious consolation into the bleeding hearts of his dying and despairing fellow-citizens; and when, wearied with exertion and oppressed with sorrow, he returned to his home, it was with

difficulty that he roused himself to speak cheeringly to his dying wife, and his afflicted but uncomplaining daughter. Zadok knew that Naomi had no hopes of her country being delivered from the Roman yoke; he knew also that she looked for the accomplishment of every word of those terrible predictions pronounced on the city by Jesus of Nazareth; and he marvelled greatly at the firmness and resignation with which she supported these prospects of desolation. But he did not know the inward peace that pervaded her soul, in spite of outward trials, and which was the result of her unshaken confidence in Him whom Zadok despised. He did not know that such a faith in a crucified Redeemer as glowed in the breast of Naomi, could enable a weaker mind than hers to triumph over all the ills that flesh is heir to, or he would have ceased to wonder at her cheerful patience, and at the smile with which she strove to greet him on his return from his daily occupations. It was for the sufferings of others that Naomi mourned, and for the spiritual darkness of her countrymen, especially her dearly-loved father and erring brother: for herself life had little charm, and death no terrors; and her most earnest prayer was that the Lord might see good to take her to himself shortly after her mother's removal, and ere the city should be given up to the outrages of a conquering army. It was only when she thought of Marcellus that a bursting sigh would rise, and a bitter tear tremble in her eye. It was sad to think how soon that heart which was devoted only to her would have to mourn her loss; and that eye which had looked on her with admiring pride and love, would seek her among the mangled bodies of the famished and the slain.

Zadok lamented and deeply sympathised in the miseries of his nation, but he did not yet despair of her final triumph. He could not yet believe that the God of Israel had abandoned his favoured people, and the city

where his glory had dwelt; and though heavy were the chastisements with which He was now visiting the sins of his children, yet the priest trusted that He would ere long remove the rod of his anger, and stand up to deliver them from the oppressor. In this hope he sustained his own dauntless courage, and excited others to the same confidence. Javan was even more sanguine than his father: he exulted in the desperate condition to which Jerusalem was reduced, for he hoped that when the hour of her greatest darkness had arrived, then would the "Sun of Righteousness arise, with healing in his wings;" then would the great Messiah appear, to triumph over every foe, and reign "before his ancients gloriously."

The rabbi Joazer also shared these hopes, and frequently expressed them to Salome, when he came to visit her, and sought to cheer her drooping spirits. He readily perceived that she did not enter into his expectations of future victory, and he taunted Naomi with having filled her mother's mind with her own heretical fears. Naomi did not deny the charge; she wished that Salome would take courage to confess her faith ere her weakness should become too great for the effort; but when she gently urged her to do so, she always replied that she had not then the power; and her daughter feared that she would depart without making one effort for her husband's conversion. The fear of death had ever been a powerful feeling with Salome; and its near approach had not yet lessened its terrors. Her hope of future blessedness was daily growing stronger and clearer, but her dread of the dark valley of the shadow of death, by which she must pass to her glorious rest, appeared unconquerable, and was the cause of much anxiety to Naomi. Many and fervent were the prayers she offered up at the throne of grace for her mother's support and comfort when the trying hour should arrive; and unweariedly did she endeavour

to strengthen her soul with the blessed promises of God, that He will be with his people in the time of weakness, and at the hour of death.

For a time her efforts would sometimes appear successful, and Salome would recover the naturally placid expression of her countenance, but ere long the same doubts and distressing fears would arise and the same restlessness return. Then she would call on Naomi, and entreat her again to repeat the same words of consolation, and pour forth her prayers in her behalf. If Naomi was absent, her faith failed; but while she hung over her, and whispered to her the encouraging promises of Scripture, she felt calm and joyful. She was sorely tempted of Satan; but when she could wield the sword of the Spirit, and shelter herself behind the shield of faith, she was enabled to quench all his fiery darts, and baffle his reiterated attacks. There was one point on which she was very anxious, and suffered many fears; and that was whether she could be accepted by Christ as one of his children, when she had not been admitted by baptism into his visible church; and it required all Naomi's arguments to convince her that as the appointed rite was out of her power, a willing heart and obedient spirit would be as acceptable to her merciful Lord, as if she had enjoyed all the privileges and advantages of partaking in his sacraments. When the tempter was baffled at one point he harassed her at another; but "He who was on her side, was greater than all that were against her;" and he gave to Naomi the happy privilege of soothing her mother's fears and stilling her doubts. Her precious copy of the Gospel was now doubly valuable to her, since she was permitted to read it to her dying parent, and witness the peace and joy which she derived from listening to it. She grieved that Salome still enjoined her to conceal it whenever Zadok entered the house, or approached the terrace where she loved to repose during the cool evening

hours; but she waited in faith and patience for the time when her timidity should cease, and she should obtain an answer to her prayers. Her tender assiduity was also engaged in daily efforts to save her mother from bodily privations, and furnish her every indulgence and comfort that her weakness required. Little food of any kind remained, and that was mostly of the coarsest description; but Naomi could look from the terrace, and behold her father's garden beyond the walls, where the ripe fruit was hanging in clusters. Could she not obtain some to cool the parched lips, and allay the feverish thirst of her mother?

She did not communicate her bold scheme to Salome, for she knew that she would forbid her attempting it; but she applied to the faithful and devoted Deborah, and with some difficulty persuaded her to consent to share the enterprise. With trembling steps these two defenceless women issued from the private gate at the back of Zadok's house, and with many a fearful glance on either side, passed rapidly down the unfrequented lane that led to the wall of the city. A sentinel was posted at the narrow gate through which she had so often passed in former days to bend her steps towards Bethany, but he was one of her father's own retainers, for the care of that entrance was committed by Simon to the priest. The man at first refused to let her pass, but at length he was moved by her entreaties, and unlocked the heavy portal, on her promise to return with the greatest speed. His life would have been forfeited if his breach of orders had been discovered; but he could not refuse the urgent request of his young mistress; and that part of the town was then almost deserted, as all the troops were engaged at the northern wall, except a few sentinels who kept watch over the movements of the tenth legion on the Mount of Olives. The garden of Zadok was extensive, and part of it reached almost to the foot of the wall which circumstance

had preserved it from the destruction that had fallen on all the orchards and gardens at a greater distance. The troops also who were encamped on the opposite hill had hitherto been employed in constructing their mounds and intrenchments; and no attack had been made on the eastern side of the city. Naomi darted forward with rapid footsteps, and in a few minutes she had gathered as much fruit as her enfeebled hands could carry. Her heart beat violently with fear, but she blessed God for the treasure she had obtained, and hastily called on Him to protect her. Followed by Deborah, breathless with fear and speed, she regained the gate, which was immediately opened by the sentinel, and as speedily closed and secured. She hoped that all danger was past; but who can conceive her terror when she saw a party of Simon's men appear, who, on perceiving her, rushed towards the spot where she stood! She sprang forwards with her burden, in the hope of reaching the entrance to her father's house, and Deborah attempted to follow her; but their trembling feet were unable to save them, and the ruffians surrounded and seized them. Naomi sank on her knees, and while the prize which she had encountered so much danger to obtain, fell on the ground, she buried her face in the folds of her garment, and implored the mercy of those wretches who knew not what mercy meant. At this moment the voice of Javan sounded in her ears, and looking up, she beheld her brother, who gazed upon her with astonishment and displeasure. He was leader of the party who had thus intercepted her return, and he had followed them more slowly when he saw them rush upon their prey. Little did he suspect that it was his sister who was thus in the power of the savage crew, until the sound of his voice caused her to raise her head, and he beheld her pale and terrified countenance. With a stern authority he commanded his men to let her go free, and they sullenly obeyed him; but it was with the

angry look of a beast of prey, compelled to relinquish its intended victim at the word of its more cruel and powerful master.

Javan then raised his sister, and demanded for what cause she had ventured out, and where she had procured the fruit which lay scattered around her. He was astonished at the boldness of her enterprise, when she informed him that she had been to the garden beyond the walls, and could not refuse his admiration at the filial devotion which had prompted her to make such a perilous attempt. He conducted her to the door of Zadok's house, closely followed by the terrified Deborah, who, in spite of her alarm, had gathered up the fallen fruit that was within her reach, and bore it off amid the fierce glances of the soldiers. They did not dare to snatch it from her; but they muttered curses on their leader, who had overawed their violence and prevented their cruelty. Javan had saved his sister from the consequences of her temerity, but he determined to execute prompt vengeance on the sentinel who had permitted her to take so daring a step. He returned to his men, and seeing their looks of rage and disappointment, he commanded them to allay their thirst for blood by slaying the unfaithful sentinel. In a moment they transfixed him with their lances, and then threw his bleeding corpse at the threshold of Zadok's house, as a warning to his daughter that her excursions exposed both herself and others to peril. The ruffians then opened the gate, and rushed tumultuously out in search of those fruits which had tempted Naomi. Javan did not attempt to restrain them, for he feared to chafe their angry spirits too much, and he suffered them to gratify their love of destruction by breaking and cutting down the luxuriant trees and plants, after they had gathered the fruit. Some they carried away, but much more they trampled beneath their feet, and then returned again to the gate. Javan left two of the party to act as sentinels

in the place of him whom they had slain, and led on the rest of the band to execute the business which had called for their exertions, when their attention had been diverted by the appearance of Naomi and her attendant.

Salome had been carried out to her customary place on the terrace, and was reclining there, when Naomi returned to her, paler than ever, and greatly agitated, but still with an expression of joy lighting up her countenance.

"Where have you been, my child?" asked Salome eagerly; "and why have you been so long absent? Have you been to Mary's house, and brought from her garden those beautiful grapes?"

"No, mother, Mary's garden has been long ago exhausted of all that it produced. These grapes I gathered from the vines which last summer you trained over the entrance to our own garden by the brook."

"What can you mean, Naomi! Have you ventured beyond the walls? You could not have been so rash?"

"I saw your feverish cheek and parched lip, my mother, and I saw these clustering grapes and ripe figs hanging in our own beautiful garden. Can you wonder that I should make an effort to obtain them for you?"

"Bless thee, my dearest Naomi. But the risk was too great, and you must not venture again. Did you meet no one by the way? I heard a noise of shouting and violence in the street beneath the wall."

"It was a party of Javan's soldiers," replied Naomi. "They did alarm me greatly; but the Lord preserved me, and sent my brother to deliver me out of their hands."

"Then you have indeed been exposed to danger, and for my sake, Naomi. Never, never again let your anxiety for my comfort lead you to take such a step. Rather would I bear the extremity of suffering and want, than that you should encounter the risk of meet-

ing those lawless ruffians who are the scourge of our unhappy city. Promise me, my child, that you will not again set your foot beyond these walls, which by God's blessing have hitherto protected us from their violence."

"I shall not again be tempted by the fruitfulness of that beloved spot yonder," answered Naomi with a sigh. "Look, mother, the spoilers are there. I see them cutting down and wantonly destroying all the plants and flowers, in which we used to take so much delight. There, there they fall beneath the strokes of their swords, and the fertile garden is becoming a desert."

Naomi turned away, unwilling any longer to witness the havoc and destruction of the trees beneath whose shade she had passed the happiest hours of her childhood and youth. Just then the little David came bounding along the terrace towards her, and called away her attention by his playful caresses. He came for the daily supply of food which Naomi denied to herself that she might bestow it on him. She could not bear to see his little dimpled cheek grow pale and wan, and his bright laughing eye look dim with pining want; and to supply the deficiency of nourishment which his mother was now unable to prevent, she every day laid by a portion for her little favourite.

The house of Mary was at a very short distance from that of Zadok, and when the street was empty, the little boy used to come day by day for his accustomed meal. How joyfully he smiled when Salome beckoned him to the side of her couch, and placed in his hands a bunch of grapes that they could hardly hold! The little fellow eagerly swallowed a few of the delicious fruit, and then pausing, he exclaimed,

"I will take them to my mother; she said she was very hungry, and her cheek looked very pale when I kissed her and came away. These grapes will do her good."

"You shall take her some more, my dear boy," said

Salome: "I fear she suffers much distress and want Would to God that I could relieve her."

The grateful happy child received the gift with joy, and calling his nurse, hurried back to share the unusual luxury with his mother. Mary was indeed reduced to a degree of privation and want, which her delicate and luxurious mode of life had made her quite unequal to bear with fortitude or patience. Her temper was naturally irritable and uncontrolled, and now anxiety, and fear, and distress had made her still more the slave of passion. She sat gloomy and distracted in her chamber, when her lovely boy ran towards her with childish glee, and presented his welcome offering. Mary snatched the fruit and eat it hastily. She did not look pleased, as David had expected, but she gazed wildly at him, and burst into tears.

"Why do you weep, mother?" asked the child. "I thought that you would smile and thank me, as I thanked the good Salome."

"I weep because my heart is sad," replied Mary. "The heiress of Bethezob is reduced to beggary, and her child is fed by the charity of others. O my father, if thou hadst foreseen the sufferings of thy daughter, it would have broken thy heart, which lived but in me, and the hope of my happiness. Alas! the spoiler has taken all the wealth which thou didst bequeath to me. My friends have forsaken me, my domestics despise and rob me, and I am desolate and miserable."

It was too true. Mary had lived in dissipation; and those who gladly frequented her house when they found splendour and profusion there, abandoned her when she had no longer the means of entertaining them. She had neglected the friendship of Zadok and his family; and though her child spent much of his time with them, she had seldom crossed their threshold since she had ceased to be an inmate of their house. Now that she was in distress, pride withheld her from seeking their

society; and though she received from them almost all her means of subsistence, it was with a sullen and ungracious spirit. It was from the vengeance of Isaac, and the treachery of her servant Reuben, that she had suffered the loss of almost all her property. She confided blindly in the supposed integrity of Reuben, and he knew where she had concealed the most valuable of her possessions. He failed not to inform his employer Isaac of what was told to him in confidence, and ere long a band of Zealots entered and pillaged the house. It was a part of their orders to carry off the lady of Bethezob to the head-quarters of their party in the temple; but she succeeded in eluding their search, and remained free, but deprived of all that might avail to procure the necessaries of life as the scarcity and famine increased. A measure of wheat was now worth far more than its weight in gold, and the vilest rubbish was eagerly purchased at a high price by those who still had money in their possession. All the grass and herbs that could be found in the city were used as food by those who were destitute of any other means of subsistence; and many of the poorest of the people would steal out, and wander by night down the ravines, in the hope of picking up something to allay the torments of hunger. These wretched creatures would willingly have fled, and deserted to the Romans; but they hesitated to forsake their wives and children, who were sure to be cruelly murdered as soon as it was known that their husbands and fathers had left the city. Titus discovered the practice of these men, and set an ambush to surprise and take them prisoners. When they were attacked they made a vigorous resistance, but they were overpowered and carried to the camp.

For the crime of defending themselves, they were barbarously scourged and tortured, and then hung up before the walls writhing in the agony of crucifixion. Again and again others were driven by despair and

famine to make the same attempt at obtaining relief, and the same dreadful fate awaited them. When morning dawned upon that ill-fated city, it often displayed to the view of the horror-stricken inhabitants as many as five hundred crosses, each supporting a tortured victim. The Roman soldiers added ridicule and insult to their cruelty, and fastened the bodies in every sort of ludicrous position, taunting and reviling the miserable beings while they expired in agony. The spots chosen for these appalling scenes were at length crowded with crosses, and wood was wanting to furnish fresh implements of torture for the prisoners who were nightly brought in. Nothing can be said to extenuate the guilt and inhumanity of these executions. They were a fearful example of heathen barbarity in the most civilized nation of that period, and by the command of one of her most enlightened generals. Titus believed that by these awful and repeated warnings he should weary the people of resistance, and convince them that it was better to throw themselves openly on his mercy; and he also feared that it would be unsafe to let them escape. In vain Marcellus pleaded with his noble commander, and besought him almost with tears of agony, to forbear this wanton infliction of death and torment. His expostulations moved the general to sympathy, but failed to make him change his cruel policy.

The effect produced on the besieged by these executions was contrary to that which Titus expected. The Zealots seized on the friends and relatives of the victims and dragging them to the walls and towers, compelled them to behold the dreadful spectacle of Roman cruelty. This checked the desertions; and none fled to the camp of the besiegers but those who preferred running the risk of immediate death rather than remaining to suffer the slower torments of hunger. Some of these were sent back into the city by Titus with their hands cut off and a message to John and Simon, exhorting them to

capitulate before it was too late, and not force him to destroy both the city and the temple.

Instead of complying with this advice, John commenced undermining the embankments on which the Roman engines were placed. He carried a quantity of combustibles to the spot; and when all the machines were erected and ready to begin their attack, he set fire to the pitch and sulphur, and immediately the ground began to rock and heave as with an earthquake. Volumes of smoke and flame issued from the ground, and the embankment, with all the ponderous engines, fell into the fiery abyss. Thus the works which had cost the Romans seventeen days of constant labour were destroyed in an hour. The army were greatly discouraged at this and other losses which were effected by the desperate valour of the Jews. Titus called a council of his officers, and proposed to them that they should either storm the city immediately, repair the works and resume the siege, or else draw a complete line of circumvallation round it, and starve the garrison to surrender. The last of these plans was decided on, and immediately executed. In three days the trench and embankment were completed, and extended a distance little less than five miles.

Naomi could watch the progress of this work along the Valley of Kedron and the Mount of Olives, and with the sad reality before her eyes she remembered how the pitying Jesus had declared that "the days should come when the enemies of Jerusalem should cast a trench about her, and keep her in on every side;" and she looked for the speedy accomplishment of the remaining part of the denunciation, "and they shall lay thee even with the dust, and thy children within thee, because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation."

Salome had ceased to occupy her usual position on the terrace. Her weakness had greatly increased, and she had received a shock to her feelings the last time she

had been carried out, which had almost overpowered her. She had desired to enjoy the early morning air, and watch the sun rising gloriously over the Mount of Olives, and she was borne as usual to her couch. But what was her horror on looking towards the mount, to behold the summit crowned with crosses, and to perceive that each cross was furnished with a living victim! A deadly faintness overcame her, and she was carried back to her chamber in a state of unconsciousness. When she recovered, the impression of the dreadful spectacle clung to her mind, and she could not shake it off for several days. Her weakness and exhaustion were considerably augmented by the shock, and it was evident to Naomi and her father that the beloved sufferer had not long to live.

Naomi rejoiced to perceive that as her mother's bodily powers failed, her soul was strengthened, and her desire to bear a good testimony to the grace of her Redeemer before she departed became fixed and strong. The dread of death subsided, and she looked for its approach with calmness and peace. Her only fear was now for the fate of Naomi, and though she tried to put her trust in the Lord, and commit her child to Him in confidence, she could not think of leaving her in that distracted city without grief and anxiety.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The immediate effect of the strict blockade which Titus had established was to carry the horrors of famine to their height. Whole families lay expiring together, and the streets were strewn with the bodies of the dead and dying. None wept over them—none buried them. No cry was heard in the streets, for the wretches had not strength to complain: they lay in a state of mute anguish, waiting unheeded by those whom once they loved, for the last expiring pang. The only sounds that broke the oppressive silence of that city of death, were the bands of robbers forcing open the houses in search of food and plunder, or the blows which they wantonly inflicted on the dead bodies that were scattered on every side. For some time the soldiers made an attempt at burying the corpses, as they feared their exposure might occasion a pestilence; but they soon became too numerous, and then they threw them over the walls into the trenches below. Even this precaution ceased ere long, and the whole city was poisoned with the odour as of a vast charnel-house. The way to the walls was actually choked with dead bodies; yet still the soldiers both of John and Simon went trampling over them to man the fortifications, with a desperate courage and hardened indifference.

At this time another crime was added to the awful catalogue of Zion's sins. The high-priest Matthias was slain on a pretended charge of holding a correspondence with the Romans; and the cruelty of the act was

enhanced by the three sons of the venerable old man being first massacred before his eyes. This sacrilegious murder at length excited in the populace a determined resolution to shake off the tyrannical yoke under which they had so long groaned in silence. One of their number, named Judas, conspired with several others to betray one of the towers to the enemy. They made the offer of surrendering it, but the Romans had learned to be suspicious of such overtures, and hesitated to take advantage of it. While they paused the conspiracy was revealed to Simon, and instant vengeance overtook Judas and his accomplices. They were slaughtered, and their bodies cast down to those with whom they had been parleying. This plan being defeated, the wretched people again began to desert in multitudes; but their sufferings did not always end with their reaching the Roman camp, for many of the famished creatures so eagerly devoured the food which was presented to them by the soldiers that they died in agony. Others perished yet more miserably. They were suspected of having swallowed their gold and jewels before they left the city; and to obtain this wealth the Arabian and Syrian allies seized a large party of the deserters, and actually cut them open alive, and searched for the treasure.

When this inhuman proceeding reached the ears of Titus he was filled with indignation, and would have ordered his cavalry to surround and slay the murderers, but that their great numbers deterred him from such an act of justice. He however denounced death against whoever should in future be guilty of such barbarity but the love of gold was in many instances greater than the fear of detection, and the crime was not entirely prevented.

The calamities of Jerusalem were at their height. What a spectacle of God's righteous vengeance did the proud city now display! Within the walls the rival factions dyed their hands in each other's blood, and in

that of their helpless countrymen; and without, the Roman camps covered the surrounding hills. The trumpets and shouts of the armed host resounded through the day, and in the darkness of night their watch-fires were seen gleaming on every side. All the pastoral beauty of the scene had departed. The summer dwellings and garden-houses of the Jewish nobles that so lately were seen among the trees, in every variety of architecture, had been levelled to the ground by the troops of Titus, and the vineyards and shady groves were swept away. The gardens had become a sandy waste, cut up in every direction by trenches and military works, in the midst of which was seen the fatal wall of Titus, effectually shutting out all hope of relief or reinforcement from the beleaguered city. Within its sad enclosure all was dark despair. The daily sacrifice had ceased, for no victims remained to offer, and the sword and famine had fearfully reduced the once crowded population. The dogs and vultures shared their dreadful meal undisturbed, for none ventured into the streets except they were compelled to do so; and then they hurried on as swiftly as possible, to avoid the spectacle of horror that surrounded them, and dreading every moment that the hand of violence would lay them by the side of the mangled corpses that strewed the way, to become the food of birds and beasts of prey, or the objects of insult to the yet more ferocious soldiery. In every street numbers of houses which had been partially destroyed by fire, were abandoned to decay, the doors and windows torn away, and in many instances the roofs fallen in, and the once splendid edifices left to be beaten by the storm and become the habitations of owls and bats. From some of the shattered tenements lights might be seen gleaming through the fissures in the walls, and showing that they were yet peopled with miserable human beings.

Among the desperate men who passed to and fro

through these desolate streets were many who even yet retained that natural vividness of countenance for which their nation ever were distinguished; but it was hardened by ferocity, and the keen black eye scowled darkly, while the compressed lip spoke of desperate thoughts and the firmness of despair. Then there were hurried gatherings of these insurgents, frequently ending in fierce quarrels and murders in the open face of day, or in the sudden attack of some house that was yet deemed worth pillaging.

Men and angels might have wept to behold how deeply this city of God, this sanctuary of holiness, was sunk into misery and desolation. But oh! it was the *spiritual* degradation of her children that called for the deepest pity; it was the spectacle of human nature in all its own depravity, unrestrained by the fear of God or the laws of man; it was the scourge of the Almighty lighting on this rebellious people, and piercing their inmost souls---a faint representation of that eternal punishment, where those who persist in rebellion will suffer and blaspheme for ever, but repent not.

Amid all the crime and all the horror of that siege, there was one event that seemed to surpass every other, and even moved the hearts of those to whom murder was a pastime. Spies were employed by the officers of both John and Simon's party, to bring them intelligence of any provisions that they might discover in the houses of the famishing people; and one day the artful Reuben came hastily to the temple, and informed Isaac that he had observed the smell of food being cooked in the house of his former mistress. He had long ago deserted her, and only visited the house to commit fresh acts of depredation, or lead others to add to her misery, and take from her and her child the scanty pittance that she was yet able to procure. Isaac summoned a party of his chosen companions in cruelty, and hurried off to the dwelling of Mary, followed by the traitor Reuben

The door was fastened inside, but it soon yielded to the furious blows of the assailants, and they rushed on to the apartment usually occupied by the heiress of Bethezob in the days of her wealth and prosperity, and so well known to Isaac.

It was bereft of all its sumptuous furniture and rich ornaments; the repeated incursions of the robbers had left nothing that was valuable or beautiful. But she who had so often presided in that very chamber, amid a crowd of admiring guests, was there,—yet alas, how changed! Her graceful form reduced to a living skeleton, her lovely features sunk and disfigured, and all that had given a charm to her presence departed. Her eyes burnt with an almost unearthly glare, and on her cheek was a bright hectic spot, the token of fever or delirium.

She sat upon the ground, and when Isaac entered, her head was upon her knees, and her face concealed. She had not heard or heeded the noise of his violent entrance, and moved not until his footsteps on the uncovered marble pavement roused her from her painful reverie. Then she looked wildly up, and starting on her feet, exclaimed, in a hollow and hurried tone,—

"Ah, Isaac, my betrothed husband, are you come at last to claim your bride? I was fairer in those happy days when you first saw me in my pride and my beauty. But hunger and strange thoughts have worn sad ravages upon the form you used to praise."

Isaac did not reply: the memory of other scenes came over his mind, and even he was moved at the sight of the wreck of mind and body before him. Mary continued in the same wandering strain,—

"You see my apartments are not decked for our wedding, Isaac; the spoilers have taken away all my goodly furniture. But, Isaac," she added in a whisper, while she laid her wasted hand upon his arm, "I have a feast prepared—a wedding feast! Do not tell your

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comrades, for there is not enough for all. I have eaten and am satisfied, and I have reserved the rest for you. See here!"

She drew him towards a couch at the end of the room, and raised the corner of the hangings. There he beheld the mangled body of a little child which had been roasted, and from which part of the flesh had been torn and devoured.

The bloodthirsty, the cruel Isaac drew back with a cry of horror, and a shudder passed through his powerful frame, while the blood curdled in the veins of his companions, who had followed closely, in the hope of partaking in the expected meal.

"Why do ye tremble?" cried Mary, fiercely: "his mother has eaten, and will not you? Oh! do ye say that I murdered him? my beautiful, my beloved! Did ye see me give him that last embrace, and did ye behold his sweet blue eyes as they smiled at me through their tears? I held him to my bursting heart, but the demon within me strangled him—it was not I that did it. Oh do not look so loathingly at me—it was the fiend that has so long possessed my soul. It was famine, Isaac, that drove me to it. It was better that his mother's hands should take away his life, than that her eyes should see him pine away and die for want!"

"Let me go, unnatural monster in a human form!" cried Isaac, bursting from her grasp; for she held his arm with the strength of a maniac, and fixed her fiery eyes upon him with a gaze that made his blood run cold. "Let me go, ere I plunge this dagger to thy heart."

"Oh, that would be the kindest deed that you could do for me," answered the wretched mother; "God and man have deserted me, and devils possess my soul. Here, give the fatal stroke, and end the miseries that I have no power to endure."

She sank at his feet, exhausted with her wild emotions

and the effort she had made. Her eye was fixed on him, as he retreated slowly from that once radiant and joyous being, who now lay crushed beneath a load of misery and guilt. Ere he reached the door he turned again, and saw that the fire of that eye had fled, and the features were fixed in death.

Isaac and his fierce companions retraced their steps to the temple, and though they stepped unheedingly over many a livid corpse that lay in their path, yet they could not recall the dying look of the lonely heiress of Bethezob without a shudder. But the impression soon died away, and they again busily engaged in the strife and violence and ruthless war that filled the city.

For two days the scanty portion of food that Naomi was able to procure and reserve for her little favourite remained untouched; David did not appear, and she became very uneasy. She could not go out to seek him, for her father had strictly prohibited her from venturing beyond the gates of the house; and the alarm she had experienced on the day she went to the garden made her dread to expose herself to a similar danger. She waited anxiously until Zadok came home on the second evening, and then besought him to go to Mary's dwelling with some of his attendants, and ascertain whether she and her child yet lived, or whether either want or violence had put a period to their existence. Zadok was evidently distressed at her inquiries, and at length told her that they had both expired: but his manner bespoke something more than his words declared, and Naomi entreated him to inform her of all that he knew of the wayward Mary and her lovely little boy. Her father had heard the dreadful story of their death, for it had spread through the city, and caused a thrill of horror in every one who heard it; but he wished to avoid shocking the ears of his daughter with such a revolting account. Her inquiries however were so urgent, that he was compelled to own to her

that David had expired by the hands of his mother, and that despair and misery had then speedily terminated her existence. More than that he did not disclose to her; but that was sufficient to fill her with grief and horror. She could not but weep at the sad fate of the engaging child in whom she had taken so much delight; and still more at the thought of the frantic state of misery to which his mother must have been reduced ere she could have committed so dreadful a deed. An asylum had been offered to Mary in the house of Zadok, when distress had first begun to be felt in the city; and though she had then rejected it with some contempt, and preferred trusting to her own resources, the offer had been renewed more than once. But Mary was too proud to accept it; she knew that her whole mode of life had ever been opposed to the purity and simplicity that marked the family of Zadok; and in the presence of Salome and her daughter she felt a restraint that was extremely irksome to her spirit. Her mind was weakened by suffering and constant privation; and she sat in her desolate house, brooding over her sorrows and fears until reason forsook her, and she was left a prey to passion and despair — an awful example of the depth of depravity to which the human mind may sink when unsupported by God's preventing grace, and a dreadful fulfilment of the worst of those woes that had been pronounced by the prophets of old on the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Salome's feeble remains of strength were daily declining, and she blessed the Lord who was so mercifully removing her from scenes of horror that harrowed her soul. The miserable death of her relative Mary and the little David preyed upon her mind, and she passed a restless night. Zadok and Naomi had not retired to rest, though it was past midnight, when they were all startled by a tremendous crash which appeared to come from the wall beyond the temple, where the greatest

part of the Roman army was posted, and where they had just completed another set of military engines to replace those which had been destroyed by the bold stratagem of John. They listened in breathless anxiety, and expected every moment to hear the shouts of the Romans and the sounds of a desperate conflict. But nothing reached their ears until the day dawned, when Zadok hastened to discover the cause of their alarm. The noise had been occasioned, as he feared, by a large portion of the wall having fallen. It had been shaken by the blows of the engines during the preceding day, and the subterranean passage which John had dug to undermine the works of the enemy passed beneath that spot. It sunk, and the massy wall fell, leaving a heap of ruins.

The Romans rushed to the breach as soon as day-break enabled them to perceive it; but they were disappointed in their hopes of an immediate entrance, by finding that John had, with great foresight, caused a second wall to be built within, as a precaution against the event which had just occurred. This new erection was, however, of no great strength, and Titus exhorted his men to make a vigorous effort to scale it. A Syrian, named Sabinus, volunteered to attempt the perilous enterprise, and eleven others followed his example. With their shields held over their heads, they pressed forward in spite of the shower of darts, and arrows, and stones that were hurled upon them from above. Sabinus had actually reached the summit of the wall when his foot slipped, and he fell on the inside. Instantly he was surrounded, and though he rose to his knees, and made a valiant defence, he was soon overpowered and slain. Three of his followers were also killed by stones, and the remainder carried back, all severely wounded, to the camp.

But the Romans were not discouraged. Two nights after the falling of the wall, Marcellus resolved to make

a second effort to scale the breach and wall. His heart was wrung with agony at the protracted sufferings of the wretched Jews, and it died within him when he thought what might already have been the fate of Naomi. The only chance which seemed to remain of rescuing her, or any of her countrymen, from destruction, was for the besiegers to gain an entrance into the city ere famine and strife had completed the work of death that was going on within the walls. Twenty of the soldiers of the guard consented to follow him, with a standard-bearer and a trumpeter. He was also accompanied by his valiant father, who gloried in his son's intrepidity, and insisted on sharing the enterprise. Soon after midnight they passed silently through the ruins and reached the wall. They mounted it undiscovered by the guard, who had fallen asleep overpowered with fatigue. They were instantly slain, and then Marcellus commanded the trumpeter to sound a loud and stirring blast from the wall which was already gained. The sound aroused the other sentinels, and those appointed to guard the wall. They saw that the enemy had surprised them, but they knew not that the party was so small, and in a momentary panic they fled.

Titus also heard the victorious sound of the trumpet, and the shout of the triumphant band. He hastily summoned his officers and a strong party of soldiers, and hurried to the wall, where by the light of torches he saw his gallant young friend and his veteran father standing on the wall, where they had planted the standard of Rome. Marcellus informed him that the Jews had fled, and Titus with his troops succeeded in surmounting the wall and scaling the tower of Antonia before the affrighted Jews made any attempt to oppose them. They fled to the temple when they saw the enemy entering the tower, while numbers of the Romans gained access to the street below, by means of the opening into the subterranean passages that had been

made by John underneath the wall, the entrance to which was now abandoned by the besieged.

The Romans passed through the deserted Antonia, and made a furious attack on the temple; but here they met with a determined resistance from the followers of John, while Simon's party hastened to join them, and both factions united in their efforts to repulse the enemy and drive them back to the tower. Neither party gained any great advantage with their swords and spears, but at length the Jews came out and met their assailants sword in hand. Then the narrow passages were soon crowded with the dead and wounded, and the soldiers climbed over heaps of bodies to rush upon their antagonists. Ten hours did this deadly conflict last; when Titus finding it was impossible to force his way into the temple, withdrew his men, well satisfied with having gained possession of the fortress of Antonia. He loaded Marcellus with grateful praises for his gallant and most successful enterprise, and desired him to name his own reward, when the young Roman immediately demanded that when the city was taken, Zadok and his family should be spared; and requested Titus to give strict orders throughout the army that his house should be respected and left in undisturbed security, until the inhabitants could be removed to a place of safety.

Titus readily acceded to this request, and the situation of the priest's dwelling was carefully described to the troops, who were commanded not to enter it on pain of instant death.

It was early in the month of July when the Antonia was taken. Titus gave orders that the magnificent tower should be razed to the ground, and an easy ascent made for his whole army to march up the hill on which it was built. He then resolved to make one more attempt at persuading the obstinate insurgents to surrender or to meet him in open battle, by appealing to

their religious feelings, which he believed yet to exist in undiminished force. He knew that it was a day appointed in the Jewish law for a great sacrifice; but no victims remained to be offered, and the people feared to enter the temple. He therefore sent Josephus to speak with John, and offer him a free egress from the sacred edifice, if he would come forth and fight, and thus save the temple from pollution. Josephus having placed himself in a secure situation, delivered the message to John, and further besought him to spare his country, and not to cause the most holy sanctuary to be destroyed by fire, which the Romans were ready to apply to it. Some of the Jews were moved by his address, which John perceiving, immediately replied to him with many insulting words; and told him that he never entertained the slightest fear of the temple being injured, as it was the dwelling-place of Jehovah, and He would protect it. He then cursed the renegade Jew for his cowardice and treachery, and while Josephus with tears and sobs endeavoured to make an impression on his countrymen, John sent out a party of men to seize upon him, and bring him into the temple. In this he was, however disappointed, for Josephus escaped, and rejoined the Romans in safety.

When Titus saw that he could neither persuade the Jews to take pity on themselves and their families, nor to regard the sanctity of the temple, he was compelled against his will to resume the siege. He resolved on an attack in the darkness of night; and finding the place too narrow for his whole army to act together, he selected thirty men from each century, and informed them that Cerealis should take the command, while he would overlook them from one of the towers of Antonia that yet remained uninjured. His presence always acted as a powerful stimulus to the bravery of his soldiers, and he would have led them himself to the attack had not his officers entreated him to refrain from such an exposure

of his person. For their sakes he gave up the command to Cerealis; but he proclaimed that his eye would be upon the combatants, and that he should reward every act of individual courage. Led on by the hope of earning their general's approbation, the troops advanced to the temple walls at the ninth hour of the night. They did not, however, find the sentinels again sunk in sleep as they had expected, but the garrison were all on the alert, and ready to repel their attack. They rushed out in large bodies, and the Romans sustained the shock unmoved. Those who followed in the obscurity of the night mistook their own comrades for the enemy, and multitudes of the Jews fell by the swords of their own fellow-soldiers. When day dawned on the bloody scene, the fight was carried on with greater equality, and was maintained for eight hours. The Romans fought for honour and promotion, and every man strove to distinguish himself above his comrades, and merit the reward promised by the general; but not a foot of ground was gained; and at length the combatants on each side, weary of such continued and fruitless exertions, gave up the contest, and retired to their respective quarters.

A considerable part of the Antonia was levelled, and in seven days the Romans had constructed a broad road up the steep ascent, and fortified it strongly on each side. When they had thus cleared the way to the temple wall, they began to raise mounds; and notwithstanding the great difficulty of procuring timber, and the constant annoyance to which they were exposed from the attacks of the Jews, they succeeded in erecting embankments against four different parts of the outer court.

Day by day the destruction was carried on, while the horror-stricken inhabitants of Jerusalem trembled at the progress of the foe. Many still cherished a vain confidence that the holy temple would never be suffered to

fail into the hands of the heathen, but that the Lord of Hosts would yet manifest His power and save the sacred edifice from ruin. Among these Zadok was the most sanguine, and he and Javan still cheered their companions with words of hope and encouragement. They both passed their time within the temple walls, giving all their aid in its defence, while the daily combats were carried on. At night Zadok always returned to his home, and saddened the sinking hearts of his wife and daughter and the terrified Deborah with the account of the operations of the enemy and the slaughter of their own defenders. They anticipated the evils which he believed would never be realized; and amid his many feelings of grief at the evidently approaching death of his wife, one of the strongest was a deep regret that she should be taken away before the glorious appearance of Messiah, and not share with him in all the triumph and prosperity of the promised kingdom. Once he expressed this regret to Salome, who regarded him with an earnest expression of sorrow, while he spoke with ardour of the blessed days that were yet reserved for Zion.

"Oh, Zadok," she replied, "talk not to me of our country's prosperity. Alas! that is yet far distant, and we can hope to see nothing but her woe, even though our days should be prolonged beyond the time allotted to man. I am about to leave you, my beloved Zadok, and all my hopes are fixed on the joys of a better world than this. I know that you will deeply grieve at my departure, and I could not think of our separation with calmness, were it not for the confiding hope I feel, that ere long you will join me where we shall never part again."

"I cannot bid you banish these sad thoughts, my Salome," replied her husband, with much emotion, "for I cannot shut my eyes to the dreadful certainty that I shall soon be left alone. May all your future hopes be

realized, and may our souls dwell together in the presence of God. Yet I could have desired a longer continuance of our union on earth, that you with me might have beheld the Messiah coming in the clouds of heaven to redeem Israel, and to sit upon the throne of David in the glory of Jehovah."

"Zadok, I have learnt to know that Messiah will not appear in glory until he stands in the *latter* day upon the earth. This is the time of Israel's darkness and dispersion, so clearly foretold by all our holy prophets, and her restitution is yet a long way off."

"Who has taught you to adopt this belief, Salome? I fear that Naomi's wild fancies and expectations have tinged your mind also. You were wont to enter into all the views which I, in common with our most learned men, entertain of the coming of Messiah. Our sacred Scriptures plainly declare that it will be as we expect. The time is already past when our nation began to look for his appearing, and though it has been so long delayed, we have evident tokens that we shall not now look for him in vain. Our land is trodden by strangers, and our people are sunk in the lowest misery. Now—now is the time for the archangel's trump to rend the sky, and proclaim to our trembling foes that He who reigns on high is coming to protect his chosen people from their insolent oppressions! Salome, I look for him each day: and at night while I am watching your broken and uneasy slumbers, I listen for the piercing sound, and look out through the dark sky to catch the first beams of that great light that shall tell of his coming. This supports me through the scenes of horror that I daily witness, and this enables me to mark unmoved the progress of our foes. I know that their course will suddenly and swiftly be arrested when our guilty city has received its measure of chastisement."

"Oh that these glorious but vain expectations would vanish from your mind, Zadok! I would to God that

your eyes were opened to the real state and future prospects of our race! Guilty indeed we are. A load of guilt rests upon the seed of Abraham that may not be so quickly expiated. O Zadok! I tremble while I speak, but I must declare the truth. I know that nothing but the blood of Christ can atone for the guilt of the land where that blood was shed, and the blind people who cried, 'His blood be on us and on our children!'"

"Salome!" cried Zadok, starting in surprise and horror; "can I have heard aright? What mean you?"

"Do not look so terribly at me, my own Zadok," replied Salome, in a faltering voice. "Do not curse your dying wife, though she confesses to you that all her hopes of immortality are founded on the merits and death of Jesus of Nazareth. In his atoning blood I trust for the pardon of my sins, and into his hands I am ready to commit my spirit, for he has redeemed me."

"And do I live to hear this declaration from the wife of my bosom?" exclaimed Zadok vehemently. "O God of my fathers, the measure of my sorrow is now full. Salome, Salome, this from you!—you who have walked through the path of life by my side, and never till this hour have caused me one pang of disappointment. I believed that the unsullied faith of Abraham was your support in these your last days on earth, and that when I should depart in the same faith we should meet in Abraham's bosom. Now what is my hope? You have forsaken the Lord to worship a human being, and removed your trust from the Ancient of Days to place it on a crucified malefactor!"

Salome trembled violently. She had expected that Zadok would be greatly distressed at the confession of her belief in Jesus, and therefore she had deferred it from day to day; but she had not anticipated such a burst of grief, and it almost robbed her of all courage to proceed. She looked at the agitated countenance of her husband, and inwardly prayed for strength to support

her in this trying moment. The prayer was heard, and her sinking heart was stayed and encouraged. She laid her slender wasted hand on that of Zadok, and while she grasped it with all the force that remained to her, as if she feared that he would leave her in anger, she again addressed him.

"Zadok, I have loved you with a deep devoted affection that your unutterable kindness has well merited and well repaid. It has been the object of my life to please you—alas! I fear I have often thought of pleasing you more than the Lord my God. Can you then believe that I have lightly adopted opinions in opposition to yours, and which I knew would give you displeasure and grief? I have long struggled against the convictions that entered my mind many many months ago; but the Lord was too strong for me. He would not let me go on in error and unbelief, but gradually He has dispersed the clouds of prejudice that hung over my soul, and has disclosed to me the way of salvation through his Son Jesus Christ. I could not shut my eyes to the dazzling light of the Gospel, when revealed to me by the Spirit of God. As easily might I look up into the unclouded noonday sky and not see the sun shining in his strength, as read and hear the history of Jesus, and not perceive him to be the Son of God, the promised seed of David."

Zadok did not reply. He feared to give utterance to his feelings, and suffered Salome to continue.

"It was the word of God, written by His servants, and left for the conviction and comfort of His children in all ages, that has wrought this change in my mind. And now, Zadok, listen to my request; it is the last that I may ever have to make to you—let it not be the first that you have ever denied me. In the name of our covenant God I entreat you to read the Gospel—to listen to all that our dear Naomi has repeated to me; and, above all, to pray that the Lord will graciously enlighten your mind to understand and receive the truth

Then I know that you will believe—I know that you will see in Jesus of Nazareth the promised Messiah, who was to grow up as a tender plant, and a root out of a dry ground. Did not the prophet rightly describe him as despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? Zadok, you know the words of Isaiah; and can you read them without feeling how wonderfully they foretell the sufferings and death of Jesus? Oh, if you would but believe that he was wounded for *your* transgressions and bruised for *your* iniquities, you would find rest to your soul, and be filled with such joy and peace, and such humble adoring gratitude, as no other belief could ever inspire. Promise me, my own beloved husband—promise me that you will comply with my request. I am too feeble to speak as I would fain speak to you."

Zadok was moved at her earnestness, and astonished at the boldness and energy that seemed to animate her timid sinking spirit.

"What is there," he cried, "in this new doctrine, which thus seizes on its votaries with such infatuation? Naomi was ever a wayward, enthusiastic girl, and I might have anticipated that she would readily embrace any visionary ideas that were presented to her. But you, Salome, I thought possessed a calmer spirit. Why did you not apply to me when first these doubts began to trouble you? I would have answered them, and restored you to your former stability and faith in our holy religion."

"I feared your anger, Zadok, for I knew how strongly you were opposed to the doctrines of the gospel. But I consulted the law and the prophets, I examined the Scriptures with fervent prayer, and I saw that they all spoke of a suffering Messiah. The descriptions of his lowliness and rejection, his agonies and death, are as full and as minute as any of those passages that foretell his future glory and triumphant reign. Both are the inspired word of God, and both must be accomplished.

Jesus has suffered, and died, and ascended alive to Heaven, thus fulfilling all that was declared of his first coming. Christ will hereafter come again in like manner as he went up to Heaven, with the holy angels, and in the glory of his Father. Then shall he sit on his everlasting throne, and then shall be the day of Israel's triumph. They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn because of him, and he will remember his holy covenant with them, and make them once more his own people. Zadok, let us believe in him now, that when he comes, we may also be in the number of his saints, and reign with him for ever. Will you not believe in his name, that name of power and love that can charm away the fears even of a timid heart like mine?"

"Salome, I must leave you," replied Zadok gently. "You are too weak for such a discussion as this, and I see that just now all arguments would be ineffectual. I lament the change that has been wrought in you, but I cannot look on your dear pallid face and feel an emotion of anger. The Lord has permitted this trial to come upon me, and I will try to bear it with composure, and not embitter your last hours by my unavailing regrets that I have been compelled to leave you so much alone with Naomi, and exposed to the influence of her erroneous opinions. May God bless you, and may he bring you back to the right way before it is too late. Oh, if your name should be wiped away from the book of life!—but it cannot be. Your past life of obedience and piety will be remembered, and the Lord will pardon the errors into which you have fallen through weakness."

"Do not go thus sadly, Zadok; listen to me once more, and give me the promise I so fondly ask, that you will seek the truth. O how I have prayed for you!—and I feel as if my prayers would yet be heard. My God has softened your heart towards me, and you do not look at me in wrath and hatred; surely he will do more, he will give you grace to believe his word. Will you read it?"

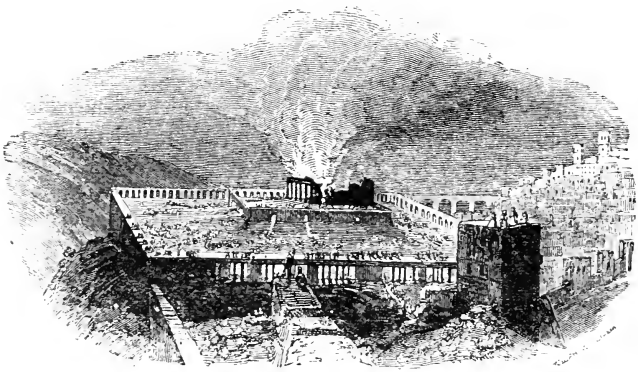
"I will, Salome. I will read what you call the word of revelation, but which I regard as a tale of imposture. I know that Naomi possesses a copy; and had I ever imagined it would work such ruin in your faith, I would long ago have destroyed it. Since you have read it, and been deceived by it, I will also peruse it attentively—not to believe its contents, but that I may be better able to remove the errors which it inculcates."

"Thank God, my Zadok! Only read it, and your acute judgment will quickly discern its divine truth. You leave me happier far than I have been for months past, for now I have told you the feelings of my inmost soul, and I have a ray of hope that they may yet be shared by you."

Zadok left the room, and immediately sought his daughter in her own chamber. She was engaged in studying the contents of her highly-valued manuscript when her father entered the room, and she laid it down with a look of anxious fear. What was her joy when Zadok informed her of the confession which he had just heard from her mother, and the promise he had given her that he would read the book which had produced so powerful an impression upon her mind! Though this was followed by a severe reproof for the part which Naomi had had in her mother's conversion, and a strong representation of the sorrow which she had thus occasioned to her father, yet she could not conceal her gratitude and delight at what had occurred. She very meekly asked the forgiveness of Zadok for having in this one instance disobeyed him, and acted contrary to his wishes; but she ventured at the same time to speak of her imperative duty to point out the way of life to others, and especially to one so near and dear to her, and not to neglect the opportunity which had been afforded her of leading her beloved mother to embrace those doctrines which had brought light and joy and peace to her own soul.

Zadok was not angry at her boldness, nor did he

charge her to refrain from any further conversation with her mother on the subject of their religion. He saw that the faith of both was unalterably fixed, and his was not a heart that could take pleasure in harsh or oppressive measures, when no good result could be hoped from them. He took the roll of parchment, and Naomi blessed the Lord when she saw him place it in the folds of his robe, and leave the room. She hastened to Salome's apartment to rejoice with her in the happy result of her long-dreaded declaration, and to pray that the Holy Spirit would bless to her father's soul the perusal of the sacred volume.



CHAPTER XXV

The Romans were securely established in the fortress of Antonia, and they occupied the whole area between the tower and the temple. A magnificent portico united the two buildings, and formed a means of communication which the Jews were resolved to cut off before it should be turned to their disadvantage by the besiegers. They therefore contrived to set fire to the cloister, and by this means made a breach which extended nearly thirty feet. The Romans in their turn set fire to the remainder, and in a short time the whole of the beautiful portico was a heap of smouldering ruins, and the space between the temple and Antonia was entirely cleared. The Jews looked on from their walls, and calmly allowed the flames to spread along the cedar roofs and gilded mouldings, until they reached the battlements of the temple. That sacred edifice was yet uninjured; and still they madly hoped to preserve it from the hands of the heathen, who daily advanced upon them by slow degrees, and made fresh steps towards their final destruction. The great cloisters that ran along the inside of the western wall appeared to be the portion of the temple that was most exposed to the attacks of the enemy, and John was resolved that if the Romans succeeded in getting upon the roof and attempting to destroy it, their temerity should not go unpunished. He caused all the hollow space between the beams and the roof to be filled with dry wood, pitch, and other combustibles: and then he commanded his

men to withdraw, as if exhausted with fatigue. The Romans saw them retire, and many of the more wary suspected that it was merely a stratagem to draw them on to destruction. But numbers were deceived, and in spite of the warnings of their comrades, rushed impetuously forward. They applied the scaling-ladders to the wall, mounted to the summit, and immediately descended on the roof of the portico.

John saw that his artifice had succeeded; and when the roof was covered with hundreds of the assailants, and they were about to precipitate themselves into the court below, he gave the word, and fire was applied to the combustibles in several places at the same moment. The flames burst forth with violence, and the Romans found themselves surrounded with the roaring element, and no way left of escape. Filled with despair, many of them leaped from the wall into the city, and were dashed to pieces. Others flung themselves down among the enemy, who now crowded to the spot, and were either crushed to death in the fall, or lay with broken limbs in the midst of their enraged foes, and were quickly slain by their swords and lances. Many of those who remained on the blazing roof were burnt to death, while they looked vainly down towards their fellow-soldiers in the area beyond the cloisters, who were unable to afford them any assistance. Titus himself beheld their desperate situation, and deeply commiserated it, though they had acted without orders, and were suffering the consequences of their heedless impetuosity. He made every possible exertion to rescue his brave men from a dreadful death, but without success; and in profound sorrow he was forced to behold even those who had retired to a broad part of the roof and defended themselves valiantly, fall sword in hand, and perish to a man.

The destruction of the cloisters had left the besiegers in undisturbed possession of the outer court, or court of

the Gentiles. The legionaries completed the erection of their mounds on the eighth of August, and Titus commanded the battering-rams to be planted against the north gallery of the temple. For the six preceding days, the most powerful of all the military engines had been playing upon the outer wall without intermission; but the enormous size of the stones, and excellent construction of the wall, had resisted all efforts at its demolition. A portion of the troops were at the same time employed in undermining the northern gate, but in this attempt they could make no progress; and nothing remained but to apply the ladders and storm the cloisters. They met with no resistance in mounting to the platform at the summit of the wall; but the moment they reached it, the Jews hurled them violently down, or slew them before they had time to cover themselves with their shields. In many places the ladders were overturned when crowded with men, and they fell backward on the marble pavement, and were dashed to pieces. The crash of the falling armour, the groans of the wounded and dying, and the shouts of the combatants, were mingled wildly and fearfully together; while above all these sounds, the regular and uninterrupted strokes of the engines were heard to fall on the walls and buttresses with an overpowering and thundering shock.

Many distinguished soldiers fell among the Romans in this assault, and the Jews also lost several of their bravest men; but they succeeded in repulsing the enemy from the top of the wall, and considered themselves victorious: they therefore sought a brief repose after the toils of the conflict, and hoped for greater success on the morrow.

This had been a day of awful suffering to poor Naomi. When she repaired early in the morning to her mother's chamber, she thought she perceived an evident alteration in her countenance; and Deborah also confirmed

her in the belief that Salome had not many days, perhaps not many hours to live. Zadok lingered near her, for he felt that he had not long to enjoy her much-beloved presence; and it was with an agonizing effort that he tore himself away, when Javan sent hastily to summon him to the temple. He felt it his duty to repair to the holy place when he heard that the walls were being stormed, and every arm was called for that could be lifted in its defence. Sadly he took leave of his dying wife, who smiled sweetly at him, and whispered a blessing as he kissed her marble brow. He dreaded that it might be the last smile he should ever see on that loved countenance; but he charged Naomi to send one of the domestics who were left to guard the house, with all speed to the temple, if any further change should take place, that he might hasten home and receive her parting breath.

All day the fearful sounds of the assault struck mournfully on the ears of Salome and her afflicted attendants, mingled with the shriller blast of the trumpets, and the cries of agony or rage. Naomi stood by her mother's couch, and saw her wasted form quiver at each piercing sound, while her clasped hands were convulsively pressed together, and her eyes looked fervently upward, as if to seek strength and comfort where only in that dreadful hour they could be found. At midday Zadok and Javan returned together from the scene of conflict to ascertain her state, and they found her greatly revived, notwithstanding the constant alarm she was suffering. They endeavoured to cheer her by assurances that the enemy had not yet obtained any advantage, and that the Jews were bravely repulsing them from the battlements. They could not tarry long, for their presence was urgently required by Simon; but Zadok's heart was somewhat relieved, for he felt assured that Salome would yet linger for several days.

It was a hot and sultry day: the sun had looked with

unclouded brightness on that once lovely scene, and not a breath of air came through the open casements to cool Salome's parched lips, and fan her pallid cheek. At length he sank in radiant glory behind the western hills, and a refreshing breeze came over the Mount of Olives, and Naomi perceived that it revived the languid spirits of her mother. She had spoken very little during the day, and had seemed to wish to be left undisturbed; but now she turned to her daughter, and bade her pray for her speedy and happy release. Naomi complied with her wish, and Salome's eye beamed with pleasure as she thanked her affectionately for this, and every act of kindness that she had so unweariedly bestowed upon her throughout her illness.

"You have been to me a blessing from the Lord, my Naomi: you have watched my poor sinking frame, and ministered to all its wants, and soothed all its sufferings with your gentle hand. But greater far have been the blessings that you have rendered to my soul: you have charmed its fears to rest, and taught it to meet the last enemy with composure, yes, even with joy. Naomi, my child, I am going to the presence of God; and it is you who have pointed out the way."

Naomi had learnt to bear the thought of her mother's death; she had learned to restrain her tears and still her beating heart, while she watched her panting breath, or while she joined with her in prayers that cut her to the soul. But she could not bear this touching expression of her mother's gratitude, and she burst into tears of mingled joy and grief. But she quickly recovered her wonted command over her feelings, and Salome continued,

"You must not weep for me, Naomi, for I have only cause to thank my gracious Father, who is so gently removing me from the evils to come. The heaviest weight that now presses on my mind is the fear of what may be your fate, my child; and the anxious doubts I

feel as to your father's spiritual state, and that of my poor Javan. But even these cares I am able to cast on my Redeemer, remembering that he careth for us."

"What joy it is to me, my dear mother, to hear you speak so peacefully, and to see the calmness that now pervades your countenance! I trusted that it would be so, and that God would give you this perfect peace before he called you to himself."

"He is very merciful, Naomi. I hope and believe that He has heard my prayers, and will give me grace and strength to make a good confession to the last. I wish to bear testimony with my latest breath to the power of our most holy faith, and the goodness and mercy of our Redeemer. If my belief in Him, and my confidence of being pardoned through his merits alone, sustain me in the hour of death, it will prove to Zadok that our faith is no vain delusion, but an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast. I only hope that the many painful doubts which I have experienced of my own personal interest in His great atonement may not return, when the shades of death gather round my soul, to obscure the blessed hope of eternal life that now sustains me."

"It may be, mother, that our great enemy may try to shake your faith in the hour of weakness. But should any doubts arise in your mind, be not troubled. Remember that your security rests not in the degree of confidence which you may be enabled to feel, but in the great things which the Lord Jesus has done for your soul. He has once suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. He has borne the penalty of all our sins, and it cannot be that we shall be made to bear it again. Our God is faithful and true, and He must fulfil the promise he has made that not one of those who come to him in the name of his Son shall ever perish."

"I know it, Naomi, I know it; and on that blessed

promise I rest my dying hope. When first I believed in Jesus as the Son of God and the Saviour of men, I often doubted whether I was one of his flock, one of those whom he would own as a disciple. But now that beautiful promise spoken by his own lips, and which you so often repeat to me, is able to banish these doubts I whisper to myself, 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;' and I am at peace. I know that I am a vile unworthy sinner; but I know that he is the unchangeable Jehovah, who keepeth his promise for ever."

"Oh, my dear mother," exclaimed Naomi, "I bless and glorify God for his goodness to us, in having removed all your fears, and given you this victory. Now you experience the truth of his promises, and find that though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet his rod and his staff they comfort you. Soon the short passage will be passed, and you will be in the presence of him who has loved you, and washed you from your sins in his own blood. How thankfully do I feel that I could lay down my head in death, and follow you to that blessed home! Were it not for my father's sake, my spirit would yearn to leave this world, so full of sorrow and of crime; but while I can try to soothe his grief, or hope to lead him to the foot of Jesus' cross, life will still be valuable."

"If I did not depend on you to be the solace and support of your dear father when I am gone," replied Salome, with a tremulous voice, "death would be much more terrible to me. I hope and believe that yet many years of happiness are reserved for you; and that, united to Marcellus, you will live an ornament to the Christian profession. Zadok will see the power and beauty of your religion, and he too will embrace the Saviour. O Naomi, my soul looks on through many fancied scenes of life, and rests with joy in the prospect

of greeting all I love on the threshold of heaven! Yes, *all*—I cannot believe that one will be missing."

"God grant it, my mother. How many of our family have already been called to the faith of Christ! and we may hope that his mercy will yet be extended to those who now reject him. May He prolong the lives of my father and brother, and give them time and grace to repent. I tremble every hour while this bloody siege continues, lest they should be suddenly called into eternity before they have sought pardon through Jesus Christ."

"It is a fearful thought," replied Salome. "And when the conquering arms of Rome have found an entrance into our wretched city, what will be their fate? Perhaps to be slain with the sword—perhaps to be led away captive into a heathen land, where the Saviour's name will not be heard. Oh, I must banish these dreadful thoughts, for they pierce my soul with agony. Naomi, bring your harp, and sing to me that hymn which has so often soothed me to repose. I am weary, and this has been a long, long day to me. I marvel that your father does not return, for the sounds of war have died away while we have been conversing."

It was true; the battle had ceased for that day, and the exhausted combatants had retired as daylight departed, to prepare for a fiercer conflict on the morrow. No sounds now fell on Salome's ear but the sighing of the evening breeze and the hoarse cry of the vultures as they hovered over the pestilent streets. The gusts of air that entered the open casements of her chamber were tainted with the foul vapours of the city, though Naomi had placed her vases of blooming flowers within the window, in the hope of excluding the noxious odour. In the midst of all her other cares and anxieties, these favourite plants were watched and tended for her mother's sake, and their bright blossoms, so pure and fragrant in the midst of death and corruption, were

an emblem of the purity of Naomi's spirit and the beauty of her holy faith, that remained unsullied amid the depravity that surrounded her, and only grew brighter and more lovely as the path in which she walked became darker. Nothing but that faith could have supported the Jewish maid under her present trials, or have enabled her to bear the prospect of those which she anticipated. Nothing but the firm assurance that her Redeemer's eye was upon her, and His arm sustaining her, and that all things would work together for good to those who loved God, could have enabled her to maintain a calm and almost a cheerful spirit in that time of matchless woe. Nothing but a perfect confidence that her mother's soul was about to wing its way to a realm of unutterable bliss, and that the same faith which opened the portals of heaven to Salome's ransomed spirit, would also enable her to join her there, could have taught her to look on the dying and beloved form before her and not feel that her heart was breaking.

Naomi took her harp, which was once her greatest pleasure and most frequent occupation, but now was never touched except when Salome wished to be soothed by its plaintive sound. She seated herself near the open casement, where she could look out on the Mount of Olives and the more distant Hills of Judgment, now illuminated by the rising moon, and in a low sweet voice she sang her mother's favourite hymn.

"Mother, let thy spirit rest in peace:
He who died for thee is watching near.
Jesus bids thine anxious doubts to cease,
And gently whispers, 'Wherefore dost thou fear'

Mother, trust thy soul to him,
Lord of the hosts of Seraphim;
The crucified, the holy one,
God's only well-beloved Son!

" "

He has bid the weary sinner come,
He calls the heavy-laden to his breast.
Oh, vainly may the troubled spirit roam,
Until at Jesu's feet it sinks to rest.

Then, mother, cast thy cares on him,
Lord of the hosts of Seraphim;
The crucified, the holy one,
God's only, well-beloved Son!

He hath said that he will ne'er cast out
In any wise the soul that comes to him.
He will not crush thy faith, though mixed with doubt,
Or quench thy heavenly hopes, however dim.

Mother, fix thy hopes on him,
Lord of the hosts of Seraphim;
The crucified, the holy one,
God's only, well-beloved Son!

And when he sets thy ransomed spirit free
From earthly trials—earthly care and woe,
I will not murmur at the sad decree.
Would I detain thee?—dearest mother, no!

In glory thou wilt dwell with him,
Lord of the hosts of Seraphim;
The crucified, the holy one,
God's only, well-beloved Son!"

When Zadok and his son left the temple to proceed towards their home, their attention was attracted by a strong light which arose from that part of the upper city where the great prison was situated. They paused to watch it for a moment, and they soon perceived that the prison was on fire; and from the distant clamour and the shouts that proceeded from the spot, they suspected that it was an act intentionally committed by some of the wild insurgents. Javan hastily summoned a party of his own men who were assembled in the temple court, and then begging his father to return home without him, he added,

"I must hasten to the prison; there is one within those walls who must not perish thus."

"Of whom do you speak, Javan?" replied his father. "All the best and most valuable men in our city have already passed from the prisons to death; and who remains for whom you feel so keen an interest? Whoever it may be, I will go with you to rescue him from the dreadful fate that seems to threaten all the captives."

"Come then, my father," said Javan; "let us lose no time, and you may yet see one whom you never thought to behold again on earth. Theophilus lives in that blazing pile, and we may save him."

"Theophilus lives!" cried Zadok. "Oh let us fly to preserve him! When he is safe I will hear all you have to tell of him—but now let us not waste a moment."

They hurried through the streets followed by their armed attendants, and soon reached the area in front of the prison. It presented a scene of confusion and uproar that baffled description. The building had been set on fire by a party of Zealots, who had previously made an ineffectual attempt to force open the gates and release the prisoners, many of whom were criminals of their own faction, confined by order of Simon. These wretches now appeared at the grated windows of their cells, and with frantic gestures and cries of terror, besought their comrades to burst open the door and set them free before the fire should spread through the building. A multitude of both factions were collected in the square, and a fierce struggle was going on near the gates; the Zealots endeavouring to tear them down, and those of Simon's party striving to repulse them. Meanwhile flames were raging furiously, and volumes of smoke and fire came down upon the crowd; while the shrieks of the prisoners, the shouts of the combatants, and the crash of falling timbers combined to increase the horror of the scene.

Javan was bold and resolute in the highest degree No danger ever deterred him from prosecuting an object which he earnestly desired to accomplish. Collecting his followers into a compact body, he placed himself at their head; and accompanied by his no less courageous father, he forced his way through the crowd, and reached a small door in the outer wall of the prison. To Zadok's surprise he produced a key which instantly opened this door, and they entered the court-yard. The same key admitted them into the building, which they found filled with a dense smoke and intensely heated by the rapidly-increasing flames. Nevertheless, Javan and Zadok rushed forward; and as they reached the door which led to Theophilus's cell they saw that all the further extremity of the passage was enveloped in a sheet of fire. They entered the cell, which was partially illuminated by the light of the flames which had seized the opposite side of the court. On the ground near the narrow window Theophilus was on his knees: his hands, from which hung heavy chains, were clasped in the attitude of fervent prayer, and his pale countenance was turned towards Heaven with an expression of heroic and saintlike resignation. The creaking of the massy door aroused his attention, and in a moment his eyes met those of Zadok, and he felt himself embraced with warm affection by his uncle. Javan stood aloof. He had visited Theophilus many times in that solitary cell, and his appearance did not awaken any fresh emotions in his stern breast.

"Come, my father," he cried, "this is no time for greetings or explanations. The flames are drawing nearer, and even now our passage may be stopped."

Zadok caught the arm of Theophilus, and supported him while they passed swiftly through the narrow gallery, and retraced the way by which he and Javan had entered. In the court they met the rushing crowd from without, for the great gates had now been

burnt down, and a free entrance was afforded to those who sought to release the terrified captives. Through this tumultuous band they wound their way, and at length reached the open area in safety. Onward they pressed, and did not pause to speak or rest, though Theophilus, weakened by long confinement and want of proper nourishment, could scarcely keep pace with his companions. Through all the time of famine, Javan had carefully provided for his cousin's sustenance; but it was not in his power to obtain for him more than would barely sustain life; and his once manly form was wasted away, and all his natural strength had forsaken him.

When they had descended the eminence on which the prison stood, they entered one of the most frequented streets. How changed was all around since Theophilus had beheld that once splendid part of the city! The houses in ruins, or wearing an air of desolation that eloquently told of the miseries of their inhabitants; and the street that was wont to be crowded with passengers, and animated with the hum of many voices, now silent and deserted—peopled only with livid corpses, and a few straggling wretches, whose forms and countenances were scarcely less spectral than those that lay stiff and cold beneath their feet. In the frequent visits which Javan had paid to his cousin's cell, he had informed him of the progress of the war, and the cruel factions that divided the city; but Theophilus had not pictured to himself a scene of such utter desolation as that which now met his view in the clear cold light of the moon. He eagerly questioned Zadok as to the welfare of his family and friends amid the general misery that seemed to prevail; and he learned with deep distress of the hopeless state to which his aunt was reduced, and the sufferings and privations to which all the family had been subjected. Zadok also learned from him the particulars of his preservation, which though they had been

told to both Naomi and her mother, had been purposely concealed by Javan from his father, lest he should interfere to procure his liberation. It had been only under a solemn promise of secrecy that the happy intelligence of Theophilus's safety had been confided to Naomi and Salome; and thus Javan had been enabled to pursue his plans without interruption.

It was the restoration of his cousin to the Jewish religion, and not his death, that had actuated Javan after he had once secured his person; and in the hope of obtaining this object, he had contrived to substitute another condemned criminal in the place of Theophilus on the dreadful day of execution. The malefactor was clothed in the vest and robe of him whom he was appointed to personate; and none of those who felt any interest in the transaction had the slightest suspicion of the change that had been made. Executions and murders were events of too common occurrence to excite much attention from the self-constituted authorities that tyrannised over the city; and Javan's artifice was known only to the jailor, who was a faithful and devoted adherent of his own. For a considerable time Javan had visited the Christian captive daily, and patiently argued with him on what he considered his fatal errors. But latterly his time had been too much occupied with the business of this siege, to allow of his devoting many hours to what had hitherto been a fruitless labour; and he had seldom seen Theophilus. Still he felt a strong desire that he should live to behold that glorious advent of the Messiah which he was himself daily expecting—he wished that, since all his arguments had failed, that awful event might break on the eyes of his deluded cousin, and at once dispel his errors, and convince him that until that moment the true Messiah had never appeared on earth. Therefore he took every precaution for his being provided with food, and frequently denied himself that Theophilus might be preserved from dying

in the state of hopeless apostasy in which he believed him to be sunk.

It was with the same feeling that he had this evening hazarded his own life to rescue the man whom he had so deeply injured from a dreadful death; and as he strode rapidly before his father and Theophilus, his soul was occupied in contemplations of approaching triumph and prosperity, in which he believed that all who shared the pure blood of Aaron, that ran in his own veins, would take a distinguished part.

He led the way through dark and narrow streets with which he was well acquainted, and which at length brought them to the private entrance, at the back of Zadok's house, near the city wall. They entered the door, and immediately met old Deborah, whose astonishment and terror, at the sight of one whom she had so long believed to be dead, were extreme. She thought it must be a spectre, and would have hurried away trembling with fear, had not Zadok detained her, and briefly informed her of the truth. With some difficulty he and Javan detached the fetters from the hands of Theophilus, and he then passed out on the terrace, followed by the two young men, as he wished to enter Salome's chamber alone, and leave them without until he had prepared her to meet Theophilus. With a gentle step he approached towards the open casement, which was his usual mode of entrance, and as he heard the sound of Naomi's harp, he felt assured that all was well. He paused to listen, and to contemplate the scene which met his view within the apartment, as the dark shadow of the wall concealed him from observation: and Naomi continued her song, with all the feeling and tender expression of devotion with which the words inspired her.

Javan and Theophilus drew near to Zadok, and with various feelings they heard the song of Christian faith which Naomi had composed for her mother's consolation.

In Theophilus's breast it inspired a sensation of delighted surprise and gratitude; in Javan's, of zealous indignation, which almost prompted him to rush forward and interrupt the blasphemous strain. In Zadok's heart were many mingled feelings that held him motionless and almost breathless, until the last chord died away on the harp of Naomi, and all was profound silence.

Salome's couch was near the window, and the rich curtains of Tyrian purple had been drawn aside to admit the refreshing evening breeze. She lay calm and still, listening to her daughter's voice, while a sweet smile rested on her deathlike countenance. Her eyes were closed, and she did not see the tears that ran unchecked down Naomi's cheek while she sang her mother's dirge of death. Deep emotion had called up a bright and hectic flush to that usually pallid cheek; but when her song was done, and she leaned silently upon her harp, the transient colour faded rapidly away, like the last brilliant rays of the setting sun dying on the cold summit of a snow-capped mountain.

Theophilus was deeply moved. When last he parted from his cousin she was in the pride of youth and beauty, and the animation of her soul looked forth from her beaming eyes. But never had she looked so lovely as now, in her sorrow and resignation. She seemed a being too pure and unearthly to tarry in this world of sin and woe, and as if she were only waiting for her summons to that heavenly home where her heart and her treasure were already laid up.

After a pause of some duration, Zadok approached the window and entered the apartment. Naomi met him without embarrassment, for she had ceased to fear that he would rebuke her for speaking of Jesus to her mother, and she saw in his countenance no traces of displeasure. Salome too looked up with a peaceful smile, and asked whether he had heard any part of Naomi's song. He did not reply to the question, but affectionately inquired

how she had passed the day since he had seen her, and spoke of the prison being on fire as the cause of his long delay in returning to her. Salome knew that it was the prison in which Theophilus had been confined, and she listened with returning animation to the account of his rescue and safe arrival at his uncle's house. She begged to see him immediately, and Theophilus was quickly at her side. The near approach of death had already destroyed the keenness of her sensibilities, and she met him with much greater composure than he could command; while Naomi was hardly able to control her feelings at the recollection of all that she and her cousin and poor Claudia had undergone, since their last meeting in the prison. Javan did not join them until they had had time to converse on the past and the future; and mutually to relate the events and the feelings that had marked the period since they parted. It was with sincere delight that Theophilus heard of Claudia's pious resignation and strengthened faith; and he blessed God for all that they had suffered, since it had been the means of confirming her faith and proving its sincerity. Long the cousins discoursed together, while Zadok remained by Salome's side, and saw with satisfaction that she sank into a deep and tranquil slumber. Still there was an altered appearance in her countenance that spoke fearfully to his heart, and he would not leave the room to seek the repose which he so much needed.

Javan and Theophilus retired, but Naomi took her place by her father, and together they watched in silence while Salome slept. Deborah also tarried, and gazed with tearful eyes on her beloved mistress, who she plainly saw would very soon be taken from their sight. About midnight she awoke, and appeared so much revived that a faint gleam of hope arose in Zadok's breast that he was not so soon to lose her. But it was only the last light of an expiring lamp ere it sinks to darkness.

"Zadok, my beloved," she said, and she laid her cold

hand on his, the hour is fast approaching when I must close my eyes for ever, and look on your face no more in this world. Call my son and Theophilus hither, that with my latest breath I may bear witness to the truth."

Deborah quickly summoned the two young men, and in breathless attention they all stood round the couch.

"I bless the Lord, my dear Theophilus," continued Salome, in a low but distinct voice, "that He has permitted me to see you once more, and given me this opportunity of telling you how much I owe to your noble example in awakening my interest towards the religion which supported you, and proving to me that it was indeed from Heaven. I am now on the verge of that eternity into which I so long believed that you had entered; and here, in the presence of God, and of those who are dearest to me on earth, I testify that Jesus of Nazareth is the true Messiah. He has revealed himself to my soul, as the only Saviour from sin and condemnation; and in His name I meet death without a fear. Oh, my dearest husband, and you too, my son, let my dying voice persuade you to seek the refuge which I have found, and save your souls alive."

She paused, but none replied, and after a short interval she proceeded.

"The evil days are come upon us—those days of which the Redeemer warned our fathers, and in the scenes which surround us we behold the proof of his divine foreknowledge. The awful completion of his prophecy is yet to come, for not one jot or tittle of all that he spoke shall pass away unfulfilled. Then, when Jerusalem is trampled down, and our holy temple cast to the ground, where will you look for safety, Zadok? Not on the earth, for our nation will be led away captive by the heathen, and persecuted in every land. Turn ye then to the stronghold ordained before the world was created, as the only sure refuge in the time of trouble.

Why should ye refuse to believe in Him who spake as never man spake, and who fulfilled all that the prophets foretold of him?"

"Mother," cried Javan, unable any longer to listen to her with composure, "mother, I implore you to cease, and not let your last words be words of blasphemy! I cannot hear the majesty of Jehovah thus insulted, and a crucified malefactor exalted to his throne, and hold my peace. Speak no more of the Nazarene; or suffer me to retire, ere I forget my love and reverence for you in zeal for the honour of my God."

"Javan, Javan! are you so hardened in prejudice? I cannot cease to tell of all that Jesus has done for my soul while yet I have strength to speak; and I would to God that my voice might sink deep into your heart, and leave an impression there never to be effaced. Will you not stay and hear my testimony? Then farewell, my son, and may the Saviour whom you despise yet look graciously on you, and bring you to himself."

Javan took his mother's hand, which was feebly extended towards him: he kissed her cheek with tenderness, and then hurried from the room to hide the emotions which he could not command.

"He is gone, and may the Spirit of the Lord follow him," said Salome, with a heavy sigh. "Zadok, you are less obdurate. I see that conviction begins to steal upon your soul. Do not deny it; do not take from me the hope that enables me to part from you with resignation. When I am in my cold grave, you will remember what I have said to you, and know that it was truth."

Again she paused to recover strength for all she wished to say, and those who stood weeping round her couch did not attempt to interrupt her. There was a tone of holy dignity, almost of inspiration, in this her dying discourse, that held them in silent and reverential attention.

"Naomi, my child," she continued, in a fainter voice,

"come near and receive my parting blessing." Naomi sank on her knees, and stifling the emotions that shook her trembling form, she waited in silence for her mother's benediction.

"May the God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, bless thee, my Naomi, and keep thee in all thy ways. May He reward thee a hundredfold for all that thou hast been to me; and may he grant that you may prove as great a blessing to your beloved father's soul as thou hast been to mine. And oh, when thy earthly course is finished, and thy spirit soars above, to enter the blissful mansions prepared for thee by our Redeemer's love, may it be my happy privilege to meet thee on the threshold, and conduct thee to the foot of the throne, and there to testify that thy teaching and thy example first led me into the heavenly road."

Naomi pressed her mother's hand to her lips, and bathed it with her tears, but she could not speak; and Zadok and Theophilus knelt beside her.

"Pray for me, Zadok," said Salome. "The shadows of death are gathering round me, and your voice should be the last—it has ever been the dearest—that I hear on earth."

The priest complied with his wife's request; and had his prayer been uttered in the Saviour's name, it would have been all that Salome's soul desired. The conclusion was consoling to her, and strengthened her hopes of his conversion; for he prayed that he might meet his wife in heaven, and that if there were in his own creed anything that obstructed his heavenward course, the Lord would deign to remove his error, and lead him into all truth. This was a concession which neither Salome nor her daughter had expected, and they heard it with secret thanksgiving and joy.

Salome closed her eyes, and Zadok thought she slept; but soon she opened them again, and fixed them on his countenance with a look of anxious affection.

"Remember, my beloved," she whispered, "remember your promise. Read the book of life, and believe. And I have one more request. Be very kind to our poor Naomi when I am gone, and do not suffer her to be reviled or harshly treated because she believes in Jesus."

"Were she less dear to me than she is," replied Zadok, "she should be guarded and cherished as the apple of my eye for your sake, my love. Fear not, Salome, I will be a father and a friend to her; and none shall deal unkindly with her while Zadok lives to protect her. And more than this—she shall tell me of this Jesus, whose name has become so dear to your soul; and I will listen with sincerity, remembering that it was your dying wish."

"The blessing of my Heavenly Father be upon you for these words, my dearest husband!" exclaimed Salome, with sudden energy. "Now will my soul depart in peace, for its fondest desires are granted. Bless thou the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name!"

It seemed that Salome's heart was now relieved of all its anxious cares, for her countenance beamed with a heavenly calmness; and while she held the hand of Zadok clasped within both her own, she fell asleep. For some hours she lay motionless, while her low and lengthened breathing alone declared that life was not extinct. But there was light and conscious joy in her spirit, though its earthly tabernacle seemed already stricken by the hand of death. At length her lips moved, and in a voice scarcely audible she murmured,

"O grave, where is thy sting! O death, where is thy victory!"

"Tell us, dear Salome," said Theophilus, leaning over her affectionately, "tell us, is it all peace?"

"Triumph! triumph! as far as I have gone," she replied.

"And you have no fears, no doubts, no darkness around you?" he continued, anxious that Zadok should know how well her faith sustained her to the last.

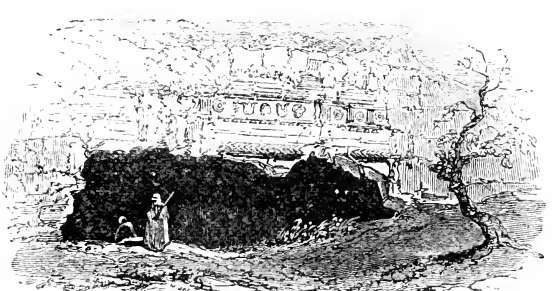
"Oh no!" she slowly and distinctly answered. "The valley is all light now. I see heaven opening beyond it. I see the redeemed with their golden harps, and almost I hear their songs of joy. There is no darkness there, for the Lamb is the light thereof."

More she tried to say, but no sound came from her parted lips, and her voice was never heard again on earth. So gently, so imperceptibly her breathing died away, that none knew at what moment her spirit fled to God. Zadok felt her hands unclasp their hold of his, and they became cold and still. With trembling steps Deborah approached, and drew aside the drapery that had hitherto excluded the light of the rising sun; and as the first beams darted brightly over the summit of Mount Olivet, they fell on the lifeless form of Salome, and showed the hue of death on her cold features.

The agony of grief, which had been so long repressed in the bosom of Zadok, now burst forth with somewhat of the fervent feeling for which his race was distinguished; and he mourned over the dead with bitter tears. Theophilus led him and his daughter from the chamber, to that in which Javan sat gloomy and sad; and the meeting of Naomi and her brother was deeply painful to both.

The circumstances in which the city was placed were such as to prevent the greatest part of the ceremonies which usually followed the death of a Jewish matron from being performed. Deborah exerted herself, with the assistance of the other domestics, to supply every deficiency, and Javan was zealously anxious that nothing of the customary forms should be omitted that could possibly be attended to. He summoned the rabbi Joazer, and concerted with him as to the funeral of his mother, which by Zadok's desire was to take place that

very day. He would not suffer the remains of his beloved wife to be carried out into the polluted streets, and he resolved that she should be laid beneath the shady trees in the garden attached to his house. The custom of the Jews forbad a priest from touching a corpse, or even remaining in the house which contained one. Zadok therefore went forth and wandered up and down the desolate street while the hasty preparations were made. Then, when the body was carried down to the simple grave that had been dug by the servants of the household, he repaired to the terrace with Naomi; and though he was not legally permitted to be present at a funeral, yet he stood there to see the mortal body of his beloved wife laid in the dust; and he was enabled to lift his eyes to Heaven with gratitude that she had been taken away from the evil to come, and with the hope that ere long he should rejoin her beyond the clear blue sky that now glowed brightly over his head.



CHAPTER XXVI.

This was no time for the indulgence of sorrow. Soon after the green turf was laid over the grave of Salome, a messenger arrived from Simon to demand the immediate appearance of Javan at the temple, as the gates were about to be fired by order of Titus, and every hand was required to prevent the execution of the dreadful project. Javan hurried to the spot, accompanied by his father and Theophilus, and they found that all the fears of the besieged were realized. Blazing torches had been applied to the gates, and the plates of silver that covered them had become intensely heated. The wooden framework had caught fire, and as they entered the court they saw the flames spring up in several directions. They joined their companions and friends in exhorting the soldiers to make every effort to extinguish the fire or arrest its further progress; but a panic had seized the men, hitherto so dauntless, and in silent dismay they watched the flames rising higher and fiercer, until in a short time they were communicated to the inner cloisters. The besieged now saw a circle of fire spreading round them, and destruction threatening themselves and their magnificent temple. All day the flames raged with violence, and the whole of the rich and beautiful cloisters were in ruins, while the officers and leaders of the Jews used ineffectual efforts to rouse their men from the state of consternation into which they and sunk. At night, Zadok and Theophilus returned

to Naomi for a few hours, but Javan remained with his chieftain, resolved to share his dangers and assist his councils.

When morning dawned Zadok prepared to leave his home once more, and join his son amid the burning walls of the sacred edifice, to defend them, or to perish beneath their ruins. Naomi felt a dark foreboding, as her father came to bid her farewell, that it might be the last time she should receive his affectionate embrace, or listen to a benediction from his lips.

"Oh, my father," she cried, while she fell at his feet and embraced his knees, "do not leave me—do not rush into certain destruction. The hour is at hand when our city will be trodden by the Gentiles, and it is in vain to resist the decrees of Heaven. Tarry with me, I implore you, and let me meet death by your side."

"Do not abandon yourself to despair, my child," replied Zadok, raising her from the ground and pressing her fondly to his heart. "All is not yet lost; and though my hopes of triumph and deliverance are fading away, yet still there may be an effectual resistance made to the enemy, and we may obtain terms from the conqueror. I will return to you if immediate danger threatens the city, and Theophilus shall remain to support and comfort you. A sacred duty calls me to the temple, and as a servant of the living God I must not abandon His sanctuary. Farewell, my Naomi; may the blessing of the Almighty rest upon you."

He left her, and she gazed after him through her tears until the gates of the courtyard closed behind him and hid his manly form from her view. Theophilus would not leave his cousin alone to her grief and apprehensions. He knew that his presence in the temple could be of no avail to arrest the approaching ruin, and therefore he remained to cheer the drooping spirit of Naomi, and if necessary, to die in her defence.

It was now the 10th of August, that fatal day which

had already proved so calamitous to Jerusalem, when the Temple of Solomon was destroyed by the Babylonian king. Titus beheld the spreading flames that threatened the total demolition of the second glorious temple of Jehovah, and he was moved to pity that so much splendour and beauty should be laid in ruins. He called a council of war, and solemnly discussed with his officers the question whether the sacred edifice should be preserved, or left to the effects of the destroying element. Many of his advisers were of opinion that the temple should no longer be regarded as a sanctuary, but as a fortress, and that it ought to be treated like any other stronghold of rebellion. But Titus was inclined towards milder measures. The magnificence of the building had struck him with profound admiration, and he wished to preserve it as one of the proudest ornaments of the Roman empire. In this desire he was seconded by several of his principal officers, and by Marcellus more warmly than the rest, and orders were instantly issued for the soldiers to unite their efforts to extinguish the flames.

It was in vain; a higher decree than that of Titus had doomed the temple to destruction, and his legions were unable to stay the course of the sword of Divine vengeance. While they toiled in fruitless zeal for the preservation of the devoted building, the Jews suddenly roused themselves and shook off the terror which had kept them inactive all the preceding day and night, and desperate thoughts of vengeance seized on their minds. Led on by Simon and Javan, they made a furious sally from the eastern gate upon the guards who were posted in the outer court. The Romans locked their shields together and received the shock with unbroken ranks; but such multitudes of the besieged came rushing upon them that Titus himself was obliged to come to their defence, and with a choice band of men he at length succeeded in repulsing the Jews, and driving them back

from the court into the temple again. He then withdrew into the Antonia, intending to make a general and final assault on the following morning. After he had retired, a party of the besieged, not discouraged by their repulse in the morning, made another attack upon the soldiers who were still employed in extinguishing the fire in the cloisters. The Romans drove them back, and followed them within the sacred precincts even to the door of the temple itself. One of the legionaries, animated with fury and a love of destruction, climbed on the shoulders of a comrade who stood before him, and threw a lighted torch through a small gilded door into the porch. The flames at once sprang up, and the Jews uttered one wild and general shriek of consternation and rage, and grasping their swords, resolved to revenge the sacrilegious act and perish in the ruins of the temple. Titus was asleep when Marcellus rushed into his chamber with the startling intelligence that the temple was on fire. He started up, and they both hastened to the spot, which was already crowded with Roman soldiers. With shouts and gestures the general commanded his men to quench the flames, but his voice was unheeded or drowned in the deafening clamour that surrounded him.

The legionaries rushed on: many of them cast flaming torches into the inner court, and then, drawing their swords, turned to the work of slaughter. Thousands fell in the first onset, and the temple steps flowed with blood, though Titus made every exertion in his power to put a stop to the carnage. He entered the temple with his officers, and gazed in wonder and admiration on the matchless splendour that met his view. As yet the holy place was untouched by the fire, and he made a last effort to save it. But one of the soldiers privately contrived to thrust a torch between the hinges of the door, and in a few moments the building was enveloped in flames. Titus and his companions were forced to retire, and the whole of the glorious structure was abandoned to ruin. One

by one the different parts of the building fell in with a tremendous crash. The cedar roofs became a sheet of flame, and the towers and pinnacles rose in columns of fire high above the rest of the edifice. The light spread far and wide, and was reflected from the neighbouring hills with a lurid glow.

At this awful moment the son of Ananus once more appeared. Wild and ghastly he stalked through the courts of the temple, and mounted the tottering wall. He gazed around him on the scene of desolation that so fearfully fulfilled his oft-repeated prophecy. Then he cried with a loud voice, "Woe to myself!" and as he spoke, a stone that was cast from the engines below struck him, and he fell backward a corpse in the flaming ruins.

What were the sensations of the horror-stricken inhabitants when they were aroused by the shout that burst from the temple when the conflagration broke out! They looked towards the holy hill, and beheld its summit a mass of glowing flames. Fear and wrath and dire revenge animated the pale countenances of these famished and woe-worn men; and from the streets of the upper city were heard such cries of anguish and despair as reached the rocks and hills around, and were echoed back to mingle with the shouts of the Roman soldiers, and the dying groans of those who were perishing in the flames. In the midst of the confusion John of Gischala, ever intent on his own preservation, rushed out of the temple with a band of Zealots, and succeeded in forcing his way through the crowd and reaching the upper city in safety. At a later period a larger body of his adherents also took refuge there; but the priests and the greater portion of the Jewish leaders remained in the burning pile.

Every part of the temple was ransacked by the Roman soldiers, who climbed over heaps of slain to seize on the treasures that gleamed on all sides. The wealth that had been laid up by the Zealots was discovered and borne away, with the gold and jewels and rich vestments

belonging to the service of the sanctuary; and even the bodies of the slaughtered priests were stripped of their embroidered vests and ornamented girdles by the rapacious hands of the victorious troops. One small band of Romans were seen hurrying through the courts, engaged in a different pursuit to that of their fellow-soldiers. They were Marcellus and a few of his faithful friends seeking to discover and save Zadok the priest. They were passing by the altar where he had been wont to minister in his course, when they observed a Roman soldier tearing away the golden clasp from the girdle of a slaughtered priest. Marcellus sprang forward, and beheld the lifeless countenance of Naomi's father. He had fallen beside the altar, and his features even in death wore the expression of dignified calmness that seldom deserted him in any event of life. Marcellus had arrested the plundering hand of the soldier, and as he stooped to replace the vestments of the priest, his eye fell on a roll of parchment that had been concealed in the folds of his garment. He took it up, and what was his astonishment at perceiving that it was a copy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Could it be possible that Zadok believed that Gospel? He secured the precious volume in his own vest, and with the assistance of his comrades bore the body of the priest to that part of the building where the fire was spreading most rapidly. They cast it into the flames, and left it to be consumed on that glorious funeral pile, safe from the insults which were heaped on the mangled forms of his brethren by the brutal soldiery.

This pious act performed, Marcellus sought for his commander, and obtained from him permission to lead a sufficient body of men from the temple to secure the house and family of Zadok from injury. Already a number of persons had escaped from the burning ruins, and were rushing distractedly through the streets of the lower city and that portion of the town which was connected with the temple. They were pursued by parties of the vic-

torious troops, and the alarm was spread that the whole body of the Romans was coming down to bring fire and sword among the wretched inhabitants. Marcellus hurried on; he dreaded that even now he might be too late to save Naomi and her mother from danger and alarm. All whom he approached in traversing the well-known streets that led to Zadok's dwelling, fled before him, supposing that he and his followers came only to destroy

The flames of the burning temple illuminated the whole of the city, and by that terrific light Marcellus saw what ravages famine and the sword had made among the inhabitants. He stepped shuddering over the decaying corpses that polluted the streets; and when his eye glanced upward he met the despairing gaze of many a spectral countenance watching him from the windows of the houses, and shrinking with terror at his approach.

The intrepid young soldier trembled with anxiety as he reached the gate of Zadok's house. Perhaps he should find his beloved Naomi a ghastly corpse! Could she have survived so much horror and privation? The gate was closed and secured inside, but it yielded to the united and powerful efforts of the soldiers, and Marcellus entered the courtyard. It was silent and deserted, for the domestics had fled to hide themselves at the dreaded approach of the Romans. Marcellus stationed the greatest part of his men in the court to prevent the entrance of any who might come for plunder or destruction; and attended only by two of his party, he proceeded with a beating heart to search the house for the objects of his anxiety. He found them not in the apartments, and he passed out upon the terrace. The red light that burnt so fiercely above fell upon the garden beneath the terrace, and he beheld a female form kneeling on the turf, while by her side stood one who seemed resolved to protect her or perish with her. An aged woman was near them, who uttered a shriek of terror as by the light of the conflagration she beheld three Roman soldiers appear on the

terrace. Her scream awakened the kneeling maiden to a remembrance of her perilous situation, and she sprang to her feet.

"Slay her, Theophilus!" cried Deborah, in an accent of despair; "plunge your sword to her heart, and save her from the Roman conquerors. Better far to see her life-blood flow on the grave of her mother, than that she should be borne away a captive in the hands of the idolaters!"

Theophilus gazed on his trembling and lovely charge. Had he been any other than a disciple of Christ—had he not surely believed that her Lord and Saviour was able to protect her, and that come what may, his followers must endure to the end, and possess their soul in patience, he would have yielded to the wild entreaty of Deborah, and at once have put an end to Naomi's sufferings and dangers. He supported her sinking form, for now at last her courage and firmness deserted her, and she would have fallen to the ground had not Theophilus caught her in his arms, and held her while the dreaded enemy approached.

Marcellus commanded his men to remain on the terrace and sprang down the steps alone, crying loudly,

"Naomi, my own betrothed Naomi! you have nothing to fear: it is Marcellus."

His words were unheeded by Naomi, for she had fainted; and when he reached the spot where Theophilus stood in grateful astonishment, he snatched her senseless form from the arms of her cousin, and tears rolled down his manly cheeks as he gazed on her deathlike countenance.

"Look up, my Naomi," he cried; "look up, and see that it is Marcellus who supports you. I have looked forward to this moment in the midst of bloodshed and danger; I have hoped to see your beloved face, as the reward of every toil. O gracious God! may not my hopes be snatched from me now in this hour of meeting!"

It was long before Naomi's senses returned; but at length she opened her eyes, and looked wildly round, expecting to see none but her most dreaded enemies. What words shall describe her feelings when she saw the countenance of Marcellus, and heard his exclamation of rapture at this sign of returning life! Joy was almost as overpowering as fear, and for a few moments deprived her of utterance. But a delightful feeling of perfect security came over her soul, and she soon recovered. Marcellus was with her—what earthly dangers could she fear?

The surprise and joy of Deborah were more loudly expressed than that of Naomi. She poured forth her gratitude, mingled with inquiries and conjectures, which Marcellus was too much absorbed to reply to. But Naomi had no sooner become convinced of the reality of her own happiness than her thoughts reverted to her father, and she eagerly inquired whether Marcellus had obtained any information respecting him. He would have evaded the question and deferred the sad intelligence, but Naomi marked his countenance, and her quick eye detected that he had something to conceal.

"I know it," she exclaimed; "I know the worst. My father has fallen, and I am an orphan indeed!"

"It is but too true, my Naomi," replied Marcellus; "Zadok has fallen bravely, in the defence of his hallowed altar. I saw his reverend form, and I secured it from insult; it was all that I could do. And see," he added, drawing forth the well-known manuscript, "this sacred volume was near his heart; may we hope that its truths were known and valued there?"

"God grant it!" cried the weeping Naomi. "He had ceased to despise them, but the Lord alone knows how far he had received them. His soul was devoted to the service of God in sincerity and truth, and I trust that it is now rejoicing in His presence."

"And your mother, Naomi, has she also departed from this world?"

"But yesterday she was laid beneath this turf, Marcellus; I may not mourn for her, for she died in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, and her end was full of blessedness."

"The Lord be praised!" said Marcellus. "Naomi, my father will be a father to you; and it will be my happy task to cheer your spirit, after all that you have suffered. The night of affliction has been very dark around you, my love; but we may hope that a joyful morning will yet dawn forth even in this world, and that our future lives may show our gratitude to the Lord, who has brought us through so many trials, and permitted us at length to meet each other though in circumstances of so much sorrow. Come, Theophilus, my long-lost brother, we must return to the house, and take measures for its security; and you shall tell me how it is that I see you here alive—you who have so long been wept as dead, and mourned for by the widowed heart of my poor sister."

Theophilus gave his friend a short relation of his preservation and subsequent existence in the prison, and in his turn he heard from Marcellus of all that Claudia had suffered on his account, and of her faithful and undying affection for him. When they entered the house, their discourse was interrupted by the sounds of violence and cries of terror that issued from the streets. The Roman soldiers had rushed down from the temple, and were slaying all whom they could overtake. The houses on every side were in flames; and it was only the presence of the troops who were stationed in the court, that had preserved the noble dwelling of Zadok from pillage and destruction. But the conflagration was spreading around, and ere long the fire must reach the building. It was no longer a safe retreat for Naomi; and Marcellus determined to convey her and Deborah, without loss of time, beyond the walls of the city to some place of security. He hastily prepared a litter; and

having carefully concealed Naomi and her attendant from the eyes of the now ungovernable soldiery who paraded the streets, he caused his men to bear it toward the water-gate, while he and Theophilus guarded it with drawn swords on each side. It was with considerable difficulty and frequent opposition from the excited legionaries, that they succeeded in reaching the gate. The guards appointed to defend it had fled, and they passed out into the desolate valley, once verdant with gardens and orchards. When Naomi knew that she was beyond the reach of danger, she withdrew the drapery that surrounded her, and looked around on the scenes so familiar and so dear. All was changed; not a vestige remained of what had been so beautiful and luxuriant, and the red light of the burning city fell only on a barren desert. The valley was traversed, and Marcellus with his companions reached the Roman camp at the north of the city, as the first rays of morning dawned on the work of destruction that had been accomplished in the preceding night. In his father's tent he established Naomi and Deborah; and leaving them to the care of Theophilus, he returned again to the city, and joined his commander.

The whole Roman army encamped that day in the sacred precincts of the temple, and planted their victorious eagles among the smoking ruins. A sacrifice was offered to their false deities in the sanctuary of the Lord of Hosts, and loud acclamations proclaimed the victory of Titus. The immense value of the spoils with which each soldier was enriched, greatly increased their joy: so vast was the amount of the treasures they had obtained, that gold became as brass among these soldiers. In the midst of their loud rejoicings, their attention was attracted by the sight of a small party of priests and others on the top of a wall to which they had escaped. For five days these miserable beings remained in that situation, until starvation induced them to come down

and implore for mercy. Isaac, the cruel, hard-hearted Isaac, was among them; and he entreated for life with an abject fear that excited the scorn of the Romans. It was unavailing, Titus would not listen to their supplications, and they were immediately executed.

A number of the Zealots had escaped to the upper city with their leader, and there they still defied the Romans. There were numerous and extensive subterranean passages beneath that part of the city; and the hopes of the insurgents rested in these for their preservation. It would be a repetition of scenes already described to narrate the sufferings of those who were cooped up within the walls of Sion. All the miseries of a second siege were endured; and it was not until the 7th of September that the Romans ascended the wall with shouts of triumph, and rushed through the streets, slaying and destroying as they went. But little plunder was found in this quarter: the houses were filled with putrid bodies of whole families who had died of hunger; and after gazing on the massy towers and walls of which he was now the master, Titus gave orders that the whole city should be razed to the ground and utterly destroyed, except three towers, which were left standing as monuments of the conquest.

The multitude of prisoners was embarrassing to the conquerors; and after a selection had been made of the tallest and most powerful-looking of the insurgents, to grace the triumphal return of Titus to the capital, a vast number of these rebels were put to death. The old and infirm, both of men and women, shared the same fate; and of the rest of the prisoners, many thousands were sent to the mines in various parts of the empire, or distributed among the provinces to fight as gladiators for the amusement of the populace. The number of the captives amounted to ninety-seven thousand; of those who were slain or died of famine throughout the siege

the number has been computed at no less than one million one hundred thousand!

Still the chief objects of search to the Roman soldiers, and those on whom they especially thirsted to glut their vengeance, seemed to elude their pursuit. Neither John of Gischala nor the son of Gioras was to be found amid the ruins of the city. John had sought refuge in the subterranean caverns, with a multitude of his adherents. The Romans discovered the entrance to some of these caves, and endeavoured to penetrate them, but the pestilential effluvia that proceeded from the putrid corpses that choked the passages drove them back. At length John, and his brothers who had followed him to his retreat, came forth, reduced by starvation, and surrendered to the victors on a promise of mercy. This promise was performed, and the atrocious John was spared, but condemned to perpetual imprisonment.

It was supposed that Simon had expired in one of the caverns, and the search was suspended. Titus prepared to leave the ruined city, and Marcellus rejoiced that at length he might remove his beloved Naomi from a scene where every object that met her view was a memorial of former happiness and recent calamity. The fate of her brother weighed heavily on her mind; there was no hope of his being yet alive; but every search that Marcellus had caused to be made for his body had proved ineffectual, and Naomi was forced to leave the place in uncertainty whether he had perished or been sent off to the provinces as a captive. She was treated by Rufus with the kindest attention, and everything was done by those around her to reconcile her to her situation; but her heart had been too severely wounded to recover its natural strength and elasticity thus early. She had much to lament, as well as much to be grateful for; and Marcellus did not love her less because she was frequently so much absorbed in her melancholy reflections

as to be insensible even to the pleasure of his society. She remained entirely secluded with Deborah in Rufus's tent, or travelled, concealed in a litter, until the army arrived at Cæsarea, on the coast, where Titus paused for some time before he proceeded to Cæsarea Philippi. Marcellus then applied for leave of absence for himself and his father, that they might escort Naomi to her friends at Ephesus, and the permission was readily obtained. Happily a vessel was in the port, bound for Ephesus, and in this they all embarked, and sailed away from the desolated land of Judea, towards the spot where Naomi and Theophilus hoped to meet all their surviving relatives, and to be once more united to those so dear to them both.

After their departure a messenger arrived at Cæsarea from the ruined metropolis, with intelligence that Simon and one of his officers had been discovered. A party of the Roman soldiers who were left encamped in the ruined city had been startled one day as they were reposing amid the blackened and tottering walls of the temple, by seeing a man of dignified appearance, and clothed in a rich robe of purple, over a white garment, rise suddenly among them, as if from the earth. At the first moment their superstitious fears led them to believe that it was a spectre, but on their demanding the name of the apparition, he replied, "Simon, the son of Gioras."

He had descended a secret passage on the total defeat of his party, and with several others had remained concealed ever since that time. The provisions which they had taken with them had failed, and none of his companions remained alive except Javan, who followed his chief from their retreat, and they both surrendered themselves into the hands of Terentius Rufus, who held the command of the troops remaining at Jerusalem. Simon had hoped to overawe the guard by his sudden and mysterious appearance, and thus to

effect his escape; but in this hope he was disappointed and found himself a captive in the hands of his enemies. This news was most welcome to Titus, and he dispatched immediate orders that the son of Gioras should be sent with his comrade to join him at Cæsarea, and assist to swell the honour of his triumph.

The domes and pinnacles of Diana's far-famed temple were glowing in the ruddy beams of the setting sun, when the white sails of a vessel were descried from the watch-towers of Ephesus, bearing swiftly and steadily towards the port. It was known by the signals hoisted from the masthead to be a merchant-ship returning from Syria, and numbers of the inhabitants of the city assembled on the quays and the banks of the river to witness the arrival of the goodly vessel, and hear from the passengers the latest intelligence of the war in Judea. Among those who waited most anxiously for the approach of the ship to the landing-place, were Amaziah and his wife, with their adopted daughter Claudia. They hoped to receive some communication from their beloved friends in Jerusalem, or at least a letter from Marcellus, telling of the state of the metropolis. Possibly some of their countrymen might have escaped from the beleaguered city, and from them they should hear of the welfare of those so deeply interesting to them all.

A favourable breeze filled the sails of the vessel, and it cut through the yielding waters with the grace and rapidity of a water-bird, and yet the motion seemed too slow for the anxious impatience of the Jewish exiles. They wandered to and fro along the margin of the river, to the point of land where the broad stream fell into the bosom of the ocean, and again returned to the landing-place. The daylight died away before the ship had entered the mouth of the river, and ere it reached the quay its tall mast and lofty prow could hardly be distinguished in the increasing darkness. But lights were

hoisted from the rigging, and gleamed on the crowded deck, and the rush of the parting waters told that the noble bark was coming gallantly against the stream. Many torches were brought down to the shore, and their waving and flickering light fell on the anxious and strongly-marked Jewish features of Amaziah and Judith, and the fairer countenance of their young companion. The anchor was cast out, the ropes were thrown on shore, and the vessel lay steadily against the marble steps of the quay. What voice was that so wild and shrill that sounded from the shore above all the murmurings of the assembled crowd? That pale and delicate girl who stood by the side of Amaziah, and leant upon his arm, had cast her tearful eyes upon the deck of the vessel, and in the midst of the groups of passengers she had discerned a form that seemed the vision of one long dead and deeply mourned.

She clung to the arm of Amaziah, and pointed convulsively to the deck, while her large blue eyes were dilated with astonishment and fear, and her parted lips refused to utter the name so dear and so familiar to them. Judith and her husband looked in vain for the cause of Claudia's agitation. The form which had conjured up such wild emotions had disappeared among the crowd, and gradually she became convinced that it had been a creature of her imagination, and that the image for ever present to her heart had caused the startling fancy. Her extended hand fell down again, and with a deep drawn and shivering sigh she faintly whispered,—

Oh, it was a blissful, but a cruel deception!"

"What was it, my child?" asked Judith. "Did you see any countenance that recalled the memory of the friends we left in Judea?"

"Yes, mother, yes; I thought I saw those features that haunt my sleeping hours, and seem to smile upon me from the skies by day. They looked more like those

of a living man than the angelic face that visits my dreams, and my foolish heart was startled. But ah! it is there again! Look, Judith, look at the side of the vessel;—and another form is there! O God of mercy, let not my bewildered brain thus mock me with such fancies! They come—they come on! They have stepped upon the quay! Oh, those are no forms of air. Take me, Amaziah, take me to meet them, and let me find it true, or die!"

Judith and Amaziah were hardly less agitated than their companion. They likewise saw the figures that passed from the deck to the shore, and they likewise knew not how to trust their eyes. But the breathless suspense soon terminated in a blissful reality, and they embraced the living forms of their lamented son and their beloved Naomi. It would be vain to attempt to paint the feelings of that group, whose hearts were filled to overflowing with so many and powerful emotions. It was not for some moments that the presence of Marcellus and his father was perceived, but then they were warmly and joyfully greeted; and then came the inquiries after Zadok and Salome, who were supposed to have sent away their daughter, and to have remained themselves to witness the fate of their country. Rufus quickly replied, and silenced all further questions; while the tears of Naomi plainly told that she had not abandoned her native land until she was a lonely orphan.

The house which Amaziah occupied was not far distant from the banks of the river; and when the party so unexpectedly united were assembled in the pillared verandah, many hours were passed in sweet discourse though deeply tinged with melancholy recollections, and recitals of sufferings and trials that never could be effaced from the heart. But hope, and faith, and resignation shed their happy influence over that family group, and deep gratitude was seated in every heart, for the mercies that were so bountifully mingled with their

afflictions. Rufus was a heathen amid a family of Christians. Would he remain hardened in idolatry when he saw the blessed fruits of a purer religion so beautifully displayed around him?

Some weeks had elapsed since the arrival of the merchant-ship, and the bitterness of Naomi's feelings had begun in some measure to subside, when Rufus announced that he could no longer tarry at Ephesus. but must take advantage of a ship which he found was shortly to sail for Rome, and return to the capital to meet Titus, and share in the glories of his triumphant entry. Marcellus had obtained permission to absent himself, and he gladly relinquished his share in the honours of the magnificent but somewhat barbarous ceremony that was expected. He however urgently joined in the request of his father, that Naomi would consent to their marriage taking place before the departure of the latter, and that the union of Claudia and Theophilus might be celebrated at the same time. Naomi's heart was still too much oppressed with the remembrance of the sad scenes she had so recently witnessed, to enable her to feel that it was a time for the accomplishment of all her hopes of earthly happiness; but she yielded to the solicitations of all her friends, and an early day was fixed for the nuptials. The benediction was pronounced on the two young couples in the church consecrated to the service of Christ; and the hands of the venerable Christian bishop were laid on their heads as they knelt devoutly before the altar. Many of the Ephesian converts and exiled disciples from Judea were present at the sacred ceremony; and all were deeply interested in the two lovely maidens who after so much suffering and so many heavy trials, which they had borne with exemplary fortitude, at length were rewarded with as much of happiness as they could hope to possess on earth.

Rufus took leave of his children and departed for Rome, with a promise that he would return to visit them

at Ephesus, when his presence was no longer required with the army. This promise he was unable to fulfil until the following spring, when once again he joined the happy family—and this time he did not come alone He was accompanied by a man, who, though still young in years, bore the deep furrows of toil and suffering, and uncontrolled passions, on his pale cheek and lofty brow. That brow wore less of pride, and those dark eyes glanced less fiercely than they were wont to do, for captivity and disappointed hopes had humbled the heart that once burned with ambition, and beat with a thirst for vengeance. Tears of softened and natural feeling flowed down his cheeks as he clasped Naomi in his arms and extended his hand to her husband and to Theophilus. It was Javan. Rufus had found him in slavery at Rome, and with a generosity that was worthy of a Christian, he had forgotten all past injuries, and redeemed the proud young Pharisee from the servitude that galled his spirit. The chastisements of the Lord had not been altogether thrown away upon him. He never forgot his native land, or ceased to mourn her degradation; but it was not with the wrathful bitterness that once preyed on his heart; for he learned to regard her afflictions as the just retribution of her crimes, and to look for her restitution to glory when that Jesus whose name he had so often blasphemed, shall come in the clouds of heaven, with all his holy angels, to sit on the throne of David, and reign over his people for ever.

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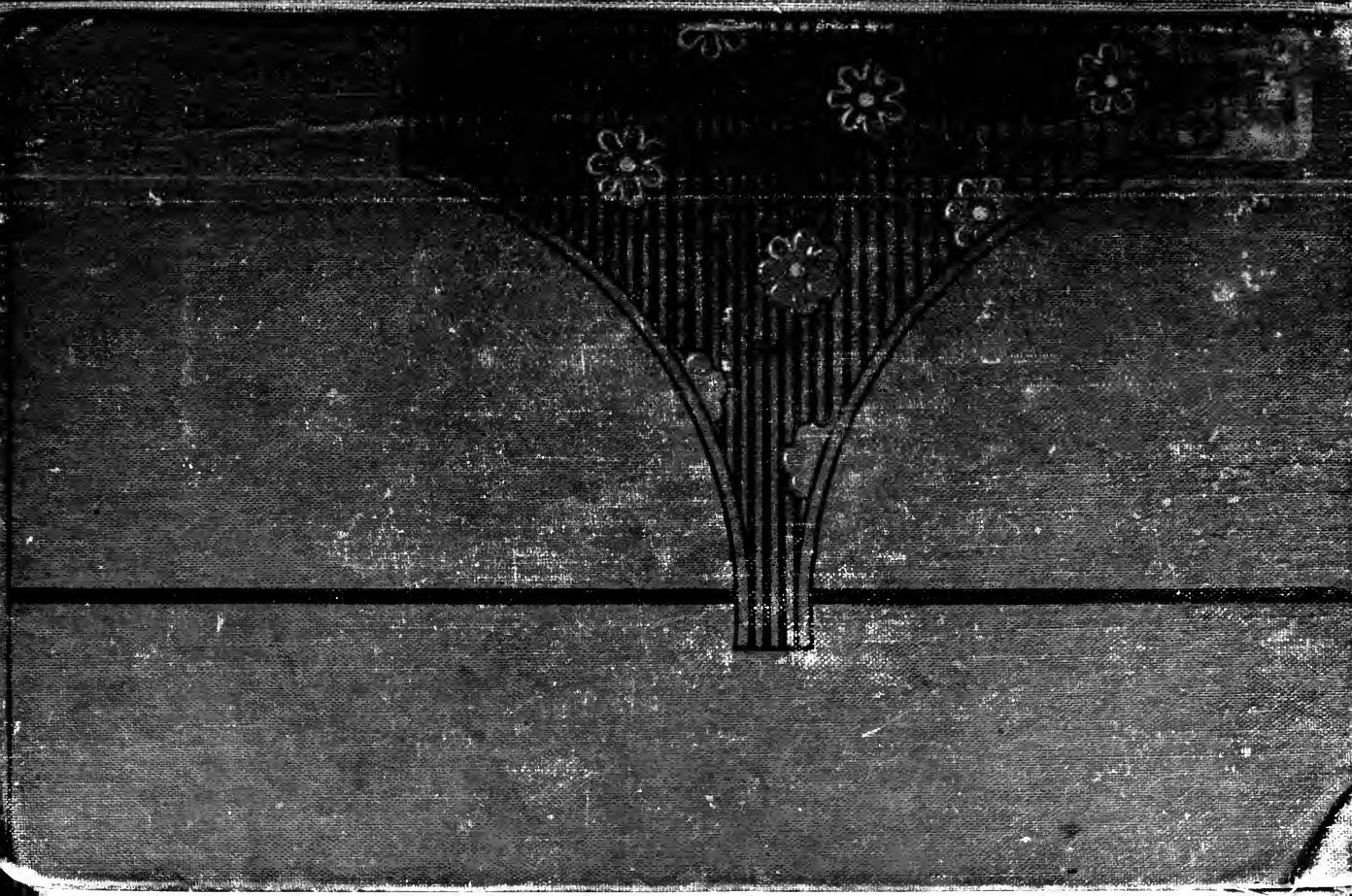
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